

Hishikage Daiji
菱影代理

イラスト 森野ヒロ

黒の魔王 X

赤

Hishikage Daiji
菱影代理

イラスト 森野ヒロ

FREEDOM
NOVEL

Kuro no Maou

Volume 10 - The Demon King and The Hero

Author: Hishi Kage Dairi

Illustrator: Morino Hiro

Translate: [Shikkaku Translations](#) - [Entruce Translations](#)

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Chapter 151 – Nightmare (1)

Body is heavy, head is heavy, the continuously dozing consciousness will never permit to leave this warm space.

But, it won't allow a lazy thought,

"What time it is, do you know!? Hurry and wake up!"

Thanks to Mom, I certainly woke up.

"Hm.....What, time?"

The loud voice of mom, indicated it was 7 AM currently.

".....I see"

"Stop dozing off.....hurry up and get ready or you'll really be late!"

Saying that, mom turned back her glossy raven-black hair, and left the room.

Seeing the well-ordered proportions of her that looked like a model, I stood up unsteadily, while still in a daze.

No, wrong, this wasn't laziness, the body was instinctively desiring rest.

Strange, I didn't pull an all-nighter yesterday, I certainly slept at the right time, and didn't even do exercises that would leave fatigue.

Yes, yesterday was the same as always, a normal day.

"Time for changing clothes....."

My head still rotating slowly, I headed towards the closet by dragging my body, and put on the school uniform that hung on the hanger.

From that point, was the normal daily routine work, even without paying attention to it, the body moved on its own.

Washed my face, brushed the teeth, for eating the breakfast, headed towards the living room, there I exchanged the morning salutations with family.

".....Good Morning"

The words that left my mouth, in the first place my voice was low it became

even more low by 1 octave, and turned into a groaning voice of the dead.

But with just that, nothing else changed from normal.

The scene that I had repeated yesterday, day before yesterday and will repeat it tomorrow, day after tomorrow too.

Good Morning“

Father, who was wearing a suit and was reading the newspaper in his hands, raised the face up, and gave me a small greeting.

His figure was like that of a typical father, but due to his small build and child-face, to the extent some may even think, what if he was secretly still a student.

But, because he was my father, it didn't feel that strange to me.

“Good morning. Mao, are you sick?”

The thing that reached my ears which was even more refreshing than the chirp of a songbird, were the morning salutations and words that show caring about me from my sister, Mana.

Mao, I felt it had been a long, to be called by that name.

“No, I don't have a fever or cold.....just, I feel like lazing, not wanting to do anything.”

I spoke spiritless lines lazily.

The sister showed an understanding face, seeing my condition, most probably she would have thought it was because of lack of sleep.

I am mostly chased by the deadline due to that I pulled all-nighters, it wasn't strange for me to show my laziness in front of my family due to lack of sleep.

But, today I was obviously strange.

No matter how much I thought there was no reason for fatigue, but the body was sluggishly moving as if revolting against my words.

This most probably, was not a physical fatigue, but a mental fatigue.

In the first place, there shouldn't been anything through which I would get a mental shock.

Overenthusiastically confessing to Shirasaki-san just for getting rejected, I hadn't suffered from such a melancholic event yet.

Well, I didn't even have strong feelings of love for her that I would confess to her either though.

"Why are dozing off, take this and get going! Yuriko-chan is already here!"

".....Yuriko-chan?"

While being forced to take the somewhat-less-love-filled bentou from mom, I was told that.

Yuriko-chan, who the hell is that, Ah, wait, isn't it Shirasaki-san's name.

Eh, What, she came here? For whom? me?

Impossible, Shirasaki-san is only a fellow club member, our relationship is only above than friend and lot below than best-friend, lover relationship, not in hell, even my classmates keep on telling me 'Keep the delusion in your works only' with sympathizing eyes.

No, but well, if she had come here in reality, it ain't my delusion.

The reason Shirasaki-san had come, must be because of club activity related, I didn't know exactly, but something like this also happens.

Thinking about it, I thought it wouldn't be good to keep her waiting, stuffed the bentou inside the bag, and left the living room.

"I'm going"

Hearing the words 'Have a safe trip', I head towards the entrance corridor quickly.

But, changing my shoes, the moment I rest my hands on the door of my familiar house, the body stiffened as if it got struck by lightning.

".....I don't want to go"

Suddenly, I thought as such.

This lazy body and sluggish mind, might be a major factor.

But, this time it wasn't a matter of wanting to do or not, my leg refused to

move forward, for something more fundamental, like instinctively.

I don't want to go, does that mean School?

No, I don't want to go outside.

The outside, world, spread outside the entrance corridor, was isolated by my house, an another world.

"No, it's not good.....I have to go to school....."

Furthermore, there was a person waiting for me named Shirasaki-san on the other side of the door.

Cutting the gloomy thoughts, I opened the door to outside.

"Ah——"

The scene spread outside the open door, was hell.

The soil was drenched with blood, the ground's surface was drilled by many craters as though they were creating by taking a hella strong shock.

The thunderously blazing flames close up from left and right, upon seeing more clearly, someone crucified on a cross was being burned in the flames.

The things burning, were not only humans, but also many houses and all, anyhow, many-many things were being destroyed and caught fire.

"You cannot run."

The murmur of that small child, pierced deep through my ear.

I moved my vision a little below, she was there.

The one waiting for me, was not flaxen-haired, good-looking Shirasaki Yuriko,

"I won't let you escape"

but it was the Apostle of God, having white skin, white hair and white clothes along with brilliantly shining crimson eyes.

"Sariel....."

7th Apostle, Sariel was standing in front of me, holding a thin spear.

"I won't allow you to escape from this world."

The thin arms of Sariel moved.

With an unbelievable speed the pointed side of the thin spear, struck deep inside my abdomen.

“Gahaa!?”

The blood scattered, feeling the severe pain piercing my body, without having any other choice, I grabbed the spear stuck in my stomach instinctively.

That moment, the spear was pulled out.

The blade didn't completely leave the body, due to which my body also got pulled.

“Guaa.....S-Sto,p.....”

While grabbing the spear with slender arms, slowly, but surely, Sariel pulled me to outside, the other world.

I tried to stop with all my strength, but it was nothing more than wasted-effort by the powerless me.

“.....Stop it.....Just stop it”

I don't, I don't want to go, I don't want to go outside, to that world.

The place I belong is this, with my peaceful life and family, I belong here.

That's why, I don't want to go that bloody world, with just pain, injustice and nobody is saved.

"S-T——"

"I won't let you escape."

The body floated in air.

The completely-powerless me was pulled out from the entrance corridor of house while being impaled by the spear.

And, the moment I was thrown in the ‘other world’, the house I was in just before, got covered in flames—— “Stop lllllllllllllllllllllllltttttttttttttt”

“——Kuroho!”

Having my called out, my consciousness completely woke up.

“Ah.....This is.....”

Upon widening my eyes, only my right eye worked.

In that small vision, the crying face of Lily, and a little different room than of the familiar guild's guest room, was reflected.

“Dream, huh.....”

Somehow, it felt like I saw a really bad dream.

I already forgot what scenes did I see in the dream, anyhow, there was no doubt it was a bad dream.

Due to that , I screamed and Lily came to me.

“I'm fine, don't worry about me, Lily”

“.....Yeah”

For making her feel relieved, I embraced her small body and patted her head.

No, it was the opposite, doing that, I myself was feeling relieved.

Upon my calmness returning to me, I realized some points, like thanks to the nightmare, I have a lot of sweat stuck on my body.

“Sorry, I must smell of sweat”

“No, I don't hate Kurono's scent”

Even so I couldn't let her become become dirty, so I released her quickly from my hands.

Lily came down from the bed while flapping her wings, and left the room saying the breakfast was ready.

She wasn't able to change her anxious look till the end, and I was the making her look like that.

“.....It's alright. I'm fine”

As to persuade myself, I mutter.

I cannot forget it, I can't help but think it, that was why, I had no choice but to accept the reality.

“Time to wash my face.”

This place was, a room in the boarding house mainly used by adventurers in Spada.

From the time that fight had ended, a week had already passed.

Chapter 152 – Nightmare (2)

That girl, appeared abruptly.

She had light pink hair, at a glance she was wearing a white garment like a magician, but it is short, exposing the thighs and shoulders, the appearance is radical.

She has well-ordered face, as if she fully understood her own beauty, she wore many decorative ornaments on her.

A showy noble girl, that is the most suitable expression for her appearance.

But,

“11th Apostle Misa, Well, you scum demons won’t understand the meaning of this name——”

She was a monster wearing human skin.

“U, A.....”

Before he knew it, he was lying with face down.

After taking the wave of some attack magic, his body flew easily, and was struck severely on the ground, he understood that much within his mind.

“.....Simon”

Having his name called out by a familiar voice, Simon starts to regain his consciousness.

“Susu-san?”

Upon regaining the consciousness, he understood that he was taken to wreckage of toppled over carriage by Susu.

But, the thing that worried him was, the expression of her which used to be always calm and composed was, distorted with panic, no, pain.

“Um, Are you fi—NGUU!”

The words of worry, were interrupted by her hand.

“Don’t make noise, she will notice us”

In a position of being hugged, hearing the words of Susu near his ears, Simon nodded.

“We can’t win against her——”

Susu while hugging Simon, without making a sound slipped in the gap of the toppled over carriage.

Dark, Narrow. The feeling was of getting stuffed inside a coffin with slightly opened lid.

“We don’t have any other way to live other than to keep on hiding.....”

Her tone was filled with a given up attitude.

“Nh, Nh-!”

Having his mouth blocked, Simon raised the voice of protest.

Outside the sounds of fierce battle, screams of adventurers was resounding.

They were still fighting, against the girl with despair-giving power, not giving up, keeping on resisting till the end of their life.

Nevertheless, hiding by himself, though he was not a brave warrior but a weak alchemist, he still felt the surge to resist.

“Due to negligence, my core got a strong attack.....I’m sorry, I can’t do anything other than to protect you through the camouflage.....”

Hearing that, Simon’s body stiffened.

He knew that her race was a slime from the time of self-introductions, and, he, a rank 1 adventurer too, knew the core was the vital point of slimes.

The core acts as the heart and brain of body, it is the most important organ to a slime, a attack to that means an inevitable death.

“.....”

He couldn’t find any words to speak, no, even if he did and tried to, he wouldn’t be able to speak as long as his mouth was blocked.

But even without words, Susu shows an expression as though she knew what

Simon was thinking.

“Don’t worry, I will protect you to the end.....”

Simon felt, his legs getting submerged in water-like thing.

That was because, Susu was covering Simon’s body after changing it into slime form.

He didn’t feel any unpleasant feeling from it.

Because, she was only thinking of protecting Simon, even though her own death was in front of her.

“.....Nh, Nhhh!”

“Fufu, you’re kind, worrying about me.....It’s not something you need to worry about, it isn’t a bad way to die while protecting the person you love, right?”

Susu had already changed her body from below the chest into slime, and was already covering to the neck of Simon.

The places still as a human were, the normal looking girl face, and the right hand covering Simon’s mouth.

“Well then, Goodbye, I love you——”

Susu removed her right hand from Simon’s mouth, in turn blocked it with her lips.

No, that was without a doubt the passionate kiss of a lovestruck girl.

“Nh!”

The soft feeling on the lips, didn’t even last for one second.

Finally Susu’s body had turned completely to slime, and was covering Simon from the tip of toe to the top of head with a semi-transparent substance.

“.....!”

The person being protected didn’t knew it, but it was the flawless concealment skill.

The epidermis of Slime had tremendous camouflaging power and changes to match its surrounding, without touching it no one would know that something

was there.

Then, the sound and smell.

Even if Simon moved a little, no sound would reach outside and will be absorbed, because it covering the whole body, it even concealed the body odor which even a beast man wouldn't be able to sense.

And, the flawless presence concealment due to the DP of『Hanzoma』

Susu, the person who can even deceive the sixth sense,

“O-i! Please reply if anyone is alive!”

Really did save, Simon from the threat of Apostle, just like she said.

But, by the time Kurono arrived, Susu's body had already lost the glitter of life, and reduced to just a red core.

Simon, while hugging her remains feeling depressed, was getting crushed by his powerlessness.

That, didn't change even now, 1 week after the fight——

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(simon POV)

“Nh.....”

It feels like a I saw a dream.

That was memory of 1 week ago, the memory of the useless me, who couldn't do anything, and was just protected.

Even if I keep on thinking about it, I will only be engulfed in the darkness.

Intentionally stopping off the thought process, somewhat forcibly tried to move.

“.....Hot”

Today is 13th day of Hatsuhi, finally the summer is coming, the heat in

atmosphere has risen a lot from yesterday.

I crawl out of bed dragging my body which is sticky due to unpleasant sweat.

The king-size bed with white sheet spread over it, is already too big for the small me.

It is not only big.

Though there isn't any canopy, but all the materials used for making this simple bed are first-class goods.

It isn't something, I, a rank 1 adventurer should lie down on.

And, the unsuitable social position thing was not only the bed, but this whole room too.

It absurd to even compare it to the normal storerooms of guild, like the laboratory or guest rooms.

The vastness and structure, along with the furniture and equipments, not even one is something normal.

Just like a place where a noble would reside—No, this place, in itself is a room inside the mansion of a genuine noble.

“When will I be able to get out of here?”

I mutter involuntarily.

Any further monologue would only turn into complaints towards my never-stopping elder sister, so I will refrain for now.

“It's good we got saved, but for it to turn like this.....”

Haa, while sighing, I recalled the reunion with my step sister, a noble of Spada, and the commanding officer of Spada's Army's Second Squad『Tempest』, Emelia Friedrich Baliel.

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Spada's Army's Second Squad『Tempest』was walking bravely in the night road

while making strong sounds of horse's hoof kicking the ground and their neighing.

“O—I!”

Shouting with a loud, while waving hands, was Simon.

Kurono, Fiona, Lily, were standing 1 step behind Simon quietly.

They had the ulterior motives to not get involved in some strange things by letting Simon talk with them, after all the commanding officer of the approaching army was his sister.

And, that bore fruit.

Without being vigilant, nor suddenly attacking, the armored warrior army, stopped in front of Simon.

“Simon? Is it really you!?”

Under the night sky, the voice of a dignified woman resounded.

“Yeah, Lia-nee”

Hearing Simon's answer, an armor knight in dark grey armor, no, most probably a general flew down from a king-size unicorn.

She gives the Halberd and Tower Shield to the warrior besides her as though she were forcing, and ran towards Simon with both hands spread.

The appearance of a full armored girl approaching, was just like having an intimidating atmosphere of a steel wall approaching.

Simon almost ran away, but he couldn't pull back in the situation, and accepted the rush of his sister, the giant armor and helmet.

At that moment, Kurono recalled the video of a dummy colliding head-on with a 10 ton truck, in the traffic safety class of elementary school.

“Simon! You big fool, because you got deceived by the old hag that you had to ——”

Simon while being strangled between two sturdy gauntlets, no, while being hugged, suddenly started to get lecture from her sister.

The almost-going-to-sleep Simon, woke up around the latter part of her words.

“Umm, Lia-nee, right now I want you to help— —”

He requested for rescue, the original aim.

Kurono stood behind without saying anything, and started to observe Simon’s sister.

(Awesome, this is the first time I can see a girl taller than mom, or rather, isn’t she taller than me too?) The results from the diagnosis were true, though she was wearing armored helmet, but her height was crossing 190cm.

The scene of Simon, 150cm + somewhat, was more like that of parent and child embracing.

However having a tall stature, the face peeking out of the helmet was not that of stern man or gorilla, but a well-ordered beautiful elf-like face.

Her dark honey-colored blonde hair was different from Simon’s ashen-colored hair, but her eyes were the same emerald green, her eyes and hair were of a typical Elf.

Her slit eyes were beautiful, but they could give the impression of coldness more.

As for Kurono, aside from that, he was more concerned about her not lowering her guard down even while hugging Simon.

Kurono had a hunch that she had higher ability than himself.

(If she would be hostile, no doubt we will die here.)

With Simon here it should be fine, but even while thinking that, cold sweat streamed down his cheeks.

After the state of tension, the talk between Simon and her sister was,

“— —We know somewhat about the situation. His Majesty Leonhart wishes for accepting all the refugees from Daedalus.”

On those words, Kurono and Simon breathed a sigh of relief.

Even Kurono knew about the name Leonhart, the king of Spada with a second name as『Sword King』.

Though being the people of Daedalus, an enemy nation, but still generously taking them in, for that Kurono gave him gratitude within his heart.

However,

“It seems like we moved a little late, the people who seemed to be refugees, all have died within the mountains of Galahad. Here too is quite brutal scene, just what happened?”

Not only Adventurers, but also the refugees met the fate of death, that fact Kurono was about to know while travelling through the Galahad mountain range.

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(simon POV)

After wearing the morning outfit, I left the bedroom for getting breakfast,

“Ah, Good Morning.....”

“Good Morning, so you were awake. I was thinking of beating you to wake you up if you were still sleeping.”

And met with the person who speaks the most fearful things in morning, Lia-nee.

She really wakes up others by ‘beating’ which I can’t deal with, what’s more it’s not a slap but punches.

Many others say her face to be beautiful, but to me it looks like a face of man-eating dragon.

Right now on her face, there were drops of sweat.

Her blonde straight hair also seem somewhat wet.

From her body wearing a thin shirt and simple leggings, steam is rising up, as though it is something like an aura, most probably she was doing martial skill training from early morning.

It's good that I was not forced to accompany her.

She is the sister who has been bullying me with the punishment called training, while knowing my weak body constitution.

The most of the reason as why I am doing work as an adventurer after running out from this Baniel house, is to run from this dreadful sister.

Really dreadful, worst case psycho, overbearing, sister who doesn't treat others as people, a person who can't act as a good person like Onii-san—— “Hm, are you thinking something rude, Simon?”

Her line of sight attacks me as though it will release laser beams.

“Eh, No, nothing”

“You're nervousness easily appears on your face, really, you get flustered easily, still you call yourself a man.”

While abusing, she grabs my both shoulders and forcefully pulls me.

Due to the difference of more than 40 cm in height, Lia-nee bends forward, and brings her face really near that I can feel her breathing.

T-This is the stance of threat, maybe because I was safe for 3 months, that my senses got dull and I got caught.

The glint of light in the sharp green eyes, seems like it is peering through my eyes.

Along with that, two mountains of ultra weight lean on my small chest, she is leaning her oversized breasts like it is natural.

I feel unpleasant for myself getting embarrassed even if for one second.

“Simon, if you're not within the home then you're no good, come back.”

And due to the words of rejection, the disgust within my corner of heart bursts out.

“I did not run away from home because of some child play.....I'm already an adult, and can live alone——”

“You are weak. You cannot gain success from being an adventurer. It would be good if any ordinary person lives its life being a low rank adventurer, but though

you're adopted you still are a person of Baniel Family, that's why you have to live a life corresponding to the family status."

The complaint of Lia-nee, I would have obediently accepted if I was the eldest son.

However, the successor to Baniel, in other words my step brother are present, and there are 3 of them.

"Stepfather also consented to it, Lia-nee, you don't have any obligation to speak this and that."

"Father is really kind towards you, Why don't you understand that he is letting you do your selfishness?"

"That is——"

"Stop the worthless research of something like alchemy, return back to home. It's not too late right now, I will give you the right 'job' which doesn't insult Baniel's family, listen, I am thinking about you, do you understand"

"Lia-nee is only worried about the status of family, not about me....."

I won't say her to understand, just leave me alone.

It's just that much, but this person interferes at each and every opportunity.

Really, Lia-nee's mansion is not a good idea, even the parent's home is more better than this.

"You can't even use magic or martial skills, as an adventurer you are useless. Even after experiencing 'war' one time, you still don't understand that much?"

These were not the complaints like before which I could refuse, this is fatal.

"You going speak excuses like alchemy is not fighting? Even so, it doesn't change the fact that you were protected till the end and are still living disgracefully."

"S, Stop it....."

"Know your position, you're not strong enough to protect someone, you can never become strong."

"Shut up!"

I try to shake the hands restraining me, but due to my powerlessness they didn't even budge a bit.

That in turn acts as a symbol for my weakness, it is extremely shameful.

"Hmph, Whatever"

She pushed me and released me from her hand restraint.

Due to the push, I stumbled some steps, and fell on my backside, even more shameful.

"I will do this talk later."

After showing me eyes full of disgust, she turned her back towards me.

"That's right, the survivors of the refugees you were worrying about, their treatment has been decided."

"Eh, Really!? What will happen to them, no, where are they!?"

I know the fact, the 'girl monster' who attacked us, had already killed all the refugees before the start of fight in Alsace.

Though there was tragic state inside Galahad Mountain Range, but there were some who were saved miraculously like me.

The survivors are only 50, at first there were more than 10,000, the survival rate was really low, just a mere, 0.5%

Even so it doesn't change the fact that they are survivors, I am greatly concerned of their treatment within Spada.

This is an information that Onii-san, a normal adventurer, won't know anytime soon, and so I will have to tell him.

"Don't be impatient, I'll tell during breakfast."

Saying that, Lia-nee left as though she lost interest to talk with me anymore.

Chapter 153 – Shadow of Peace (1)

13th of Month of Hatsuhi, it has been a week since the encounter with those annoying apostles.

We were given entry to inside Spada, right now we are spending our peaceful holidays within an inn for adventurers.

It took 3 days to cross Galahad Mountain Range to reach Spada, after arriving it took many days to give the information about the Daedalus and Alsace defensive battle, it is only from today that we can relax without doing anything.

The report went through the guild, without any problems it was completed.

I had thought of things like torture interrogation, but it ended up as needles anxiety. I also want to refrain myself from using my divine protection with full power within Spada.

When saying the guild, our fight was performed in the form of an emergency quest.

The adventurer survivors are only 4, the refugees needed to be protected are almost near extinct with the dreadful death rate, the quest ended up as a failure, big failure.

But, maybe because they took the circumstances into consideration, we were paid a little reward money.

It's not like we fought for money, but thinking about Kurono's hardships, upon getting the really low reward money, I was about to get help from the fairy Queen.

Anyhow, like this the aftermath of battle got over.

We didn't get anything, but I got to Spada with Kurono like I had thought, it is good.

However, it was outside my expectations that, that shrewd alchemist survived.

It would have been better if he died, but got saved.....really, the passion of woman is a terrifying thing, because though being a person with rank 4 abilities,

she was able to save him through the attack of an Apostle.

I am the person who knows the best of her, Susu's feelings, so I don't have any intention to complain her for doing useless things, I just can't say anything.

I am half fairy, and I pay respect and admire a lovestruck maiden with pure heart, it really is nice.

However, it is another story if Simon gets saved and I need to feel unpleasant feelings.

That weak stick like man, was the one who made me feel jealousy, though I can ignore the bad feelings, but I can't see him as a nice person.

No, I'll put aside my complaints for now, that isn't the problem that is worrying me now.

The most important pending issue is, the feelings of Kurono.

No matter of how many of refugees are sacrificed, I don't give a shit, looking at the scores of other's playing board game is more interesting than their dying numbers.

As for adventurers who fought with us, I will give them good evaluation, and I thought some were nice, but upon their death it's not to the extent I would cry and be depressed, at most I only regret at the loss of excellent pawns.

But, it won't go that way for kind-hearted Kurono, he can't find a practical answer like the loss of pawns.

I know it from the time at Village of Irz, Kurono laments, mourns for, and worries about the loss of any person, even if it wasn't because of him.

The second defeat, the fight this time, has given the damage which cannot be compared to the one of Village of Irz, Kurono has taken a severe shock due to it.

At this rate it will be bad, this time Kurono's heart is near destruction, I have to somehow cheer him up.

Fortunately, there is time.

It's good to comfort and heal Kurono's injured heart, slowly, not anyone else, but me.

“.....Fufufu”

“Oh, Lily-san, are you making an evil plot?”

Hearing the voice of Fiona, sitting on a seat around the circular table, I am brought back to reality from the ocean of thoughts.

“Don’t speak disgraceful things”

“I’m sorry, no matter how I looked, it was an evil smile, so unintentionally.”

I completely think that this woman doesn’t know to coat the words coming out of mouth.

But, if I get irritated at everything then I can’t accompany this airheaded witch, the idiotic rude remarks, I have already gotten used to them.

“Kurono-san is still not coming”

It would be better to say that you can’t wait anymore, she shows integrity at strange time.

To wait in front of a table with breakfast prepared, is like a torture to this glutton witch.

But even so she is bearing without complaining, maybe she is putting effort though being clumsy.

“Kurono is tired, wait quietly. Compared to Kurono you have quite a calm and composed face, I thought a normal human would be somewhat depressed.”

A little nasty question.

Fiona hasn’t taken any type of shock from this massive sacrifice just like me.

I’m curious about that thing a little.

Just what is this woman hiding inside her heart?

“Won’t Lily-san understand my heart with your telepathy.”

“You’ve got quite a nerve to say something like that after casting ‘protect’ on it”

Fiona’s true feelings, the innermost parts of her heart are being protected by a strong mind protect that my telepathy cannot break through.

I can only read her true feelings that she doesn't want to hide, the outer surface only. I cannot reach to the feelings she wants keep as secret.

"It's only natural for creating a wall around heart. for a witch"

"That's why I'm asking like this, so, what is it?"

"Even if you ask what is it....."

At first she looks constantly expressionless, but I felt hesitation rising up on the surface of her heart.

".....I too have taken a shock, but, having a person who has taken even greater shock in front of me, it helps me to calm down."

"I see, that might be right"

For a normal person, it is answer to consent on.

It is just like the situation when someone is about to get angry, but seeing his/her friend get angry, the anger subsides.

But, if it really was that reason,

"That's why, I'm worried about Kurono-san"

Then you won't have that expressionless face, Fiona?

"That's right, I too am worried, I need to cheer him up"

Now that I can't read her true feelings, this is nothing more than a guess, but Fiona didn't get any shock from the current situation at all.

If you say it's like mine, then no it's not, She has taken shock to the fact that 'She didn't get any shock'.

For a normal and decent person, it's natural to grieve and moan like Kurono, but it didn't go like that for her herself, even if the refugees died, the comrades who fought with us died, her heart didn't waver.

Geez, having an half-assed moral is really a trouble, just why do people hesitate to sacrifice others for protecting your important person or thing.

Their feelings, are only natural that I can understand, but I won't ever agree to them for eternity.

“Ah, Kurono-san came”

Fiona speaks in a somewhat happy voice, is she that happy to be able to eat food, no, why wouldn't be this glutton happy to be able to eat good.

“Good Morning Kurono-san”

“Yeah, Good Morning, Sorry, for making you wait——”

Kurono came after exchanging salutations with Fiona, he doesn't look any different from always.

But, the things he had lost in the fight have greatly changed the outward appearance of his.

He has lost his trademark as a black magician『Baphomet's Embrace』, and now is only wearing a clean shirt and worn-out black-dyed leather pants, it's a casual attire for a normal person.

If Kurono's body was not filled with toned muscles and not having a iron plate card hanging from his neck, one wouldn't know he is a adventurer.

But, the thing that firstly attracts attention is the eyepatch covering his left eye.

Due to the last attack of 8th Apostle Ai, Kurono lost his left eye, right now the thing inside his eye socket is the hardened black magic『Body Supplementation』 as a substitute. A temporary fake eye, of course there is no eyesight in that.

Though there is high-grade healing magic to restore something that is lost, but Kurono didn't seem like he cared much about it, and didn't even ask for it.

Though the bandage which was painful to look at has been removed, but looking at Kurono wearing the white eyepatch for medical use, it looks like he is hurt and in pain, and my heart feels like it is about to break.

I'm sorry, I cannot heal it, the fairy drug cannot restore the eyeball.....I'm regretting at my inadequacy.

“What happened Lily, are you sick?”

“No, not at all, I'm completely fine”

To Kurono's worrying kind words, I reply with a cute smile.

Yeah, I'm fine, the one who is not fine, is Kurono.

How can you keep that calm face? I know Kurono's deep anguish.

But still, during these normal days, you worry about me, smile, and be kind.

You don't have to do that much, It's alright, to be cooped up in the room, and cried the whole day, you can even rely on me too.

I will take care of you, I will keep on taking care of you.

That's why stop pretending to be fine for not making me worried about you —but, you trying so hard for me, those feelings are unbearably pleasant, I can't go against the pleasure of them tormenting my heart splendidly. [ET: S&M in one.?)]

It's bad, the person who needs to cheer up, is you and it's my responsibility, but if you keep on doing that I will only be pampered.

I can't be drowned in Kurono's kindness, I have to be helpful to him, after all I'm his fellow partner, for now only.

Chapter 154 – Shadow of Peace (2)

Kurono, Lily and Fiona are taking a somewhat late breakfast in『Tail of Cat』inn, the place they are lodging.

This unique inn organised with all war cats, is suitable for lower-middle or low rank adventurers, there are many adventurers who are drifting from the intense outside quests use this place, a perfect inn for Kurono and others.

It isn't splendidly tasty, but while eating a good amount of food, the three talk about the plans of today.

「What shall we do today? Should we go to Guild and look at some quests?」

His outward appearance is calm and composed which he is pretending, while thinking the ideal work of an adventurer, Kurono gives out such a proposal.

「You don't need to overstrain yourself Kurono, it's good if you rest a little more」

While being in the child appearance, having brought back her adult consciousness back, Lily speaks words of worry to Kurono.

「No, I'm fine, and we don't have any surplus money too」

The reward for the emergency quest, was 10 gold per person, more briefly it was paid in the money unit of Spada that is 100,000 klan. [ET/TN: klan is the currency unit]

In Daedalus the silver or gold was used just as it was, but in the city-state in the central part of Pandora Continent including Spada all used the currency unit called『klan』.

1 klan = 1 Silver is an normal and easy to understand currency value, even an not-good-with-mind adventurer can understand it.

「With 300,000 klan, won't be able to live normally for some time?」(Fiona)

This inn takes 3000 klan for 1 night, simple calculation they can stay for 100 days here.

Along with the food, drinks and other expenses, they can live for a little over 1 month, even Kurono quickly understood it.

「That's right, if we can reduce your food expenses then we can 'live for more long' with this much money.」

「Are you trying to tell me to die, Lily-san?」

In front of Fiona the plates placed are twice the amount Kurono and Lily ate.

It felt like it had been a long time seeing Fiona's real ability.

「We can't just spend it all on living expenses, We are adventurers, now that we have already spent a lot, why don't we go to shopping today to buy new equipments.」

Ignoring Fiona, who is increasing food expenses with her additional food orders, Lily gives out such a proposal.

「Shopping, eh, certainly we should.....」

Surely, Kurono lost too many things in the previous two fights.

Starting from his favorite black robe『Baphomet's Embrace』, the rare baton made for black magical power『Black Ballista Replica』, the swords used in Sword Arts, all and every sort of potions, et cetera.

In the end, the only things left with him are『Cured Grudge Hatchet『HaraRetsu』』with a big hole in it from the attack of arrow and the『Mithril Sword』stolen from Cyprus.

Mostly all of the equipments needed in fights, either have exhausted completely, or broken.

「We need to many things, if we couldn't manage it then 300,000 will just leave our hands quickly.」

Towards the two with no damage to equipments, Kurono ends up feelings guilty.

「It's not much of problem, something like 300,000 we can earn it easily.」

It's only 'small change', Lily refrained herself from saying it.

「You're right, we have to work hard and earn money.」

Kurono, felt a need to hurry, in this situation with nothing to do.

Along with Spada's Military force, and the impregnable stronghold set up near the Galahad Mountain Range, so even if Crusaders were to come Spada has the strength to stop their advance, Kurono and other's heard all this information some days ago during the time of explanation in Spada's Adventurer Guild.

However, due to the precedents of Daedalus Army, no matter how much 'It will be fine' is said, the uneasiness just won't rub off.

Just what could he could do as a mere adventurer, even Kurono understands the limits from his position.

A rank 1 and an outsider adventurer at that, the words of him will be taken as nonsense and he won't be able to get the attention to Spada Army, it's obvious even before doing it.

He can't do anything but pray that Spada Army's upper echelons are now more vigilant towards Crusaders, after the report of Emergency quest and information of Daedalus's fall.

Because he knows that, Kurono doesn't say anything, Lily too thinks that the matter is out of their hands now, and she is talking as if she has forgotten about it.

But even so, Kurono can't forget about Crusaders, and couldn't help but worry about it.

The only realistic thing he can do, is once again fight as an adventurer in war when Crusaders come attacking at Spada.

Thinking that, he needs to prepare for the fight against Crusaders, no, more precisely, Kurono thinks he needs to complete his duty to get 'Strong' so as to not lament over his powerlessness.

「Well then, let's do shopping today, I also want to get familiar with this city」

Still, Kurono couldn't help but lament, regret and say NO to the activities he needs to do for becoming strong, at least for now.

Humans are not that simple after all.

Right now, just like Lily is thinking, Kurono needed rest.

「Ufufu, it's the first time I have come to a big city, I can't wait much.」

Lily sends a good and pure looking smile to Kurono

「Yeah, Spada surely is big——」

「Excuse me, Customer」

At that moment a voice calls out from behind Kurono.

They weren't too noisy were they? While thinking that he turns back, there stood a short werecat in apron, let it be the appearance or statement, without a doubt it is a staff of this inn.

「You are Kurono-sama, right?」

「Yes」

「A letter has been sent for you, here you go.」

While saying words of gratitude, just who would have given the letter, feeling that question in mind he looks at the front, and get the answer.

「From Simon, huh」

From the moment they reached Spada, Simon went his own way and they to their own.

He was taken by his elder sister the commanding officer of the help squad, and maybe because he was busy they couldn't meet after that.

He had doubts how he could pinpoint his location, but then, if he is related to someone with great reputation in Spada like his sister, it's an easy task to know the whereabouts of an adventurer or so Kurono guessed.

「So, What about Simon?」

「Hm, Yeah, Err.....」

Upon getting urged to hurry from Lily, Kurono looked at the letter.

After reading the whole letter, Kurono conveyed the contents in a serious expression.

「The location of the survivors from refugees is written.」

I see, Lily replies that small word, and guesses the shopping today is now

cancelled.

Chapter 155 – Rejection (1)

Spada is structured with the royal castle in centre, and the castle town spreading in concentric circles.

It is the same as the capital city of Daedalus, no, as a matter of fact Daedalus was made taking Spada as a reference.

Daedalus was protected by the outer walls, and inner walls covering the royal castle, but Spada has crossed that and there are triple layers of protection.

The third protective wall, in other words the first outer wall, just inside it is the lower class district, the common people live here, the inn Kurono and others are living is also located here.

Next the second outer wall, is separated from the inner wall, it is the upper class district, the wealthy merchants or nobles live here, the adventurer guild of Spada is also located here, but is only available to rank 4 adventurers and above. It is completely unrelated place for Kurono and others right now.

And the most inner part is the third protective wall, it is the outer wall which protects the royalty of Spada, centre of the country, the royal castle.

It is the most important area where an outsider like Kurono will be punished the moment he steps there. The most probable way for a normal person to stand here would be to join the Spada Army.

Having no intention to change the job from adventurer, Kurono and others can only use the area between 3rd protective wall and 2nd protective wall, the lower class district.

And, the place he is headed towards the place where refugees were living, was also naturally in this area.

「This place seems like slums」

Fiona gives out her as usual extremely frank impressions.

「Don't say that much, people will can hear it.」

Though Kurono acted slightly modest, but deep in heart he too had the same

thoughts.

But it couldn't be helped, even without any discrimination intentions, it is very difficult to say this place, with filthy and dirty houses made of broken stone and wood, is a very good living environment.

The images of slum quarters of Rio de Janeiro, Kurono saw in Television long before, frequently pass through his mind.

Beyond the dark alleys, it wouldn't be strange if some man with good body build is doing the illegal transactions of drugs, this atmosphere was drifting all over the place.

「But, they weren't driven off to the extreme slum areas, Spada does give some generous treatment to them」

Though Lily thought it to be already nauseating here already, but her words were not a lie, because outside the third protective wall, is the most lowest area in much more bad state.

「Yeah, you're right」

Kurono too shows agreement.

Because he is also engaging in occupation like adventurer with life at risk, that he is living in simple yet clean inn.

They were all farmers till now, having lost their lands, how will they live in this Spada, maybe they will unwillingly become adventurers, Kurono guessed as such.

However, he discards the idea of looking after them, after all it is only a sort of arrogance.

「Hey Kurono, after meeting them, what will you say?」

While walking through the somewhat complicated maze-like alleys, Lily asked.

「I.....」

There are survivors of refugees though very few, the time he head this news, he was extremely delighted.

But, at the time of meeting them, there wouldn't be a chance both him and others will be pleased at each other's good health.

The 50 survivors who survived with only the survival rate being 0.5% he couldn't find the right words to say to them.

「.....Don't know」

Will it be good to say, it's good that you're alive?

Or to repent, saying that he couldn't save anyone?

Or would he worry, how they will live from now on?

「Though I don't know, but if they are alive, I need to talk to them.」

He can't find the words, but his feelings are without a doubt true.

That's why, the moment he got the news about them from the letter from Simon, he without hesitation came walking till here to meet them.

Lily already had a bad premonition, but she couldn't find the right words to stop Kurono.

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Around the three-story apartment like stone building, bungalows of wood are lined.

Not any different from the deserted place from before, this one corner was, given to the refugees to live here temporarily.

The small child, have been given to orphanage or temples of Spada, but other than them most of people are still living here.

In front of apartment, there were groups of people talking about something.

Middle-aged men, small werewolves, goblins wearing bandages on arms, lizardmen having many scales broken, there are various people of various races there.

Kurono finds some faces he has seen, and is convinced the refugees from Daedalus are really here.

However, Kurono couldn't find any words for them, they looked depressed and

had no life in eyes.

The moment he resolved to call out to them, at that moment.

「Oi, bastard!」

To the sudden voice, he turns back quickly, there stood a young man.

「bastard, you're Kurono, the adventurer one! Why are you alive! How dare you show your face in front of us, huh!!」

The face of screaming man, Kurono remembered it.

「You are, Nachim」

This man was the child of chief of Kwar Village, and the leader of vigilante corps.

At the time of meeting in village, he abused Kurono and rejected his proposal to run to Spada. Kurono has some past with him, so he remembered him clearly.

Even 1 month hasn't passed, but his good physique body is now ragged out.

With just that much, it's simple to imagine what sort of situation he met with.

「Bastard! Just because you said to run to Spada, that it ended up like this!!」

「S-Stop, that——」

To the sudden false accusation, he tried to reply back, but Nachim didn't pay heed to it.

「How dare you deceive us! I didn't knew we would be hunted by t-tha-that dreadful monster!」

「I didn't had any intention to deceive, if we didn't run then all would have died.」

The 'monster' he is saying, is most probably the apostle.

Even if he said, that he didn't knew that that monster would hunt them, but Kurono himself didn't knew that an Apostle was waiting for them.

To the escape to Spada, Kurono has no doubt it was the best option available.

However, the results which are near the extent of complete extinction, are without a doubt the reality.

「Shut up! It's all your fault! It's all your fault, you jinx, angel of death! Fuck, what happened to adventurer, fucking you yourself are only alive! Shit! Fu, Hihhi, I see, I understand, Bastard, you let every other adventurer die as sacrifices so that you can run away yourself! Isn't that right! That's why a scumbag sleaze life adventurer like you are alive!!」

「That's wrong! I didn't leave anyo——」

Kurono's words don't reach, they can't.

Nachim couldn't control his anger with just screaming, and took out his sword hanging on his waist.

He was more or less the head of vigilante corps, the posture while holding sword is also somewhat refined.

But, his anger and bloodlust increased, due to it the point of sword started trembling.

「Oi, Wait, Calm down——」

「Shut up! It's all you fault many died.....father too, my subordinates too, everyone, everyone died because of you!!」

Nachim talks big as if he would cut at any moment.

But, even before the sword is swung downward, Kurono took an 'attack' on his body.

「!？」

That was, a small stone.

It hit Kurono's collar and returns to being a road-side-lying pebble.

With a dumbfounded expression, Kurono looked at the person who threw the stone at him.

「It's your fault」

It was a young boy.

His age has passed 10, his skin is tanned due to sun, maybe from helping parent's field work.

Even in Irz, in Alsace too, it was a boy who can found at any farm village.

However, the boy is right now making an expression filled with hatred, that a young boy would never make.

「I,」

One more stone came flying.

This time it wasn't the boy, but the mother of yet small girl.

「It's due to you, all because of you——」

Before he knew it, many people made a crowd in front of him.

「It's all your damn fucking fault!」

「You dare deceive us!」

「Return my child!」

「Die! Die and apologize!」

And many stones, rapidly are thrown on Kurono, filled with malice and hostility.

「Ku.....S-Stop it.....」

On Kurono's enhanced tough body, stones thrown by people, won't even make it near the damage point.

But, the malice in each stone, scooped out Kurono's heart.

The 'worst' attack, which couldn't be blocked by any defensive magic.

「S-Stop, It.....」

The responsibility for this large sacrifice all lies in only Kurono, looking objectively at it, it just can't be.

The person who was wrong is, the 11th Apostle Misa, there isn't any other person more worst than her.

But, that thing matters no more to them, it won't be a reason from them to stop throwing stones.

The blasphemous comments of Nachim, are now the only reality to them.

It only that, Kurono got chosen as the scapegoat to run away from the responsibility of this unbearable sorrow.

However, even if he knew it, Kurono right now, neither could say anything back to them, nor could block the stones thrown at him.

Hence, the person to stop it,

「Stop it——」

was only Lily, no one else.

「——or I'll kill you」

At that moment, a sphere of white light pass through Kurono's vision.

The flood, of light and explosion sound gulps down the surroundings.

「Wha, OI!? Lily!?!」

「It's alright, I've not hurt anyone」

The worst scenery went through Kurono's head, but Lily standing in front of him, denies it with a cold voice.

It's only the warning shot, in other words, a flash grenade sort of thing.

The moment light and sounds reduce and silence returns, in front of Nachim wielding his sword, stood Lily in her young girl, true form.

「L-Lily-san.....?」

It's the first time Nachim saw the true appearance of Lily, but he still understood her identity.

Having an overwhelming beauty in front of him, the anger in Nachim's heart is overwritten by the Charm's ability.

「Don't do anymore than this, We too, will never come in front of you people again」

「H-However.....」

「Please?」

To Nachim, the words of Lily smiling coldly, felt like the words of God.

「I-It can't be helped! Stop, Stop everyone!」

Nachim turned back, and to the group who were throwing the stones, he threw the words to stop.

Maybe he still had the charisma of vigilante corp leader, or he was afraid of Lily's threat, the stones or abuse both didn't come again at Kurono.

And, he dispersed everyone, the people dispersed here and there while speaking words of complaints to Kurono.

Now, only Kurono, Lily and Fiona, who stood completely unrelated from start till end, were left there.

Lily, took the hand of dumbfounded and petrified Kurono, and smiled warmly at him.

「Let's go back, Kurono?」

「Yeah, you saved me Lily, Thank you」

Showing much more brighter smile, Lily tried to speak the words of gratitude, but the next moment her expression froze.

「But, sorry, can you leave me alone for now.....」

Having said that, Kurono quickly shook off Lily's hand.

Chapter 156 – Rejection (2)

「But, sorry, can you leave me alone for now.....」

Lily looked at her shaken off hand and Kurono's face with a vacant expression alternatively.

「Eh, Ah.....But.....」

On Kurono's unexpected words and actions, Lily revealed a clumsy smile on her frozen expression and replies.

「I'm sorry, you might be worrying, but I, no matter what, want to be alone for some time」

Kurono too, showed a strained smile, and replied back to Lily.

「T-that.....」

「Please, can you listen to my selfish request?」

That was, a precise rejection.

At that moment, Lily had the feelings of rejection thrust from Kurono at her for first time.

Lily being a fairy having telepathic power, she is able to sense the feelings and consciousness that appear on the surface, Kurono was not an exception.

Till now Kurono, didn't even had any stress towards Lily living with him let alone having evil feelings towards her.

And that thing, Lily who can read the feelings understood it the best.

But, right at this moment, Kurono thought to keep a distance between the two, she thought that.

That was neither because of uncomfortability, or he disliked Lily's attitude.

It was because if Lily stayed with him, she would see his appearance that he wants to hide.

I don't want to show my pitiable appearance to Lily, that was without a doubt,

the pride of Kurono as a man, that he has been keeping from the time he met her in the Forest of Fairies.

Hence, right now, when he has taken a shock he can't bear, he wanted to disappear from before Lily for some time.

「I'm sorry.....」

If she was in her calm state, she would have understood Kurono's feelings, no, even without telepathy, she could have guessed it from his words, attitude and actions.

But however, the thing that appeared on Kurono's outer surface, the feelings to「Run away from Lily」, assaulted Lily's heart with the most strongest attack she has felt in her whole 32 years long life.

Having been rejected by Kurono for the first time, was more than enough for her to lose her calm.

Destroying the Fountain of Light, letting everyone die, all those things were not able to create ripples in the heart of peerlessly cruel, cold-hearted Lily, but at this moment, her heart was shivering severely.

Just like, the heart of a pure lovestruck maiden who got refused on her confession towards her unrequited love person.

「No, I'm sorry, for giving you needless worry, but, I will be fine even if you leave me for now」

「No.....It's alright, I'm sorry for stopping you」

Lily, wanted to praise herself for replying without going crazy.

But her tone of voice was certainly wavering.

And that Lily's change, couldn't be notice be Kurono who is now not caring about anyone else.

On the surface, Kurono is left alone, and Lily accepted those words, just that much.

「Fiona, I'm sorry, but can you too go back home first along with Lily?」

He speaks to Fiona who was standing besides him as though she was shadow

in dark with no presence.

「Understood」

Of course, if Lily couldn't stop Kurono, it's impossible for Fiona to do it then, though she too was worried about for Kurono.

「I will be back by dinner time, sorry, the shopping can be done at a later date」

「No, don't worry about it」

Saying the words of apology along with a wry smile, Kurono starts walking towards the different way from the road, he moved towards a dark alley.

The figure of Kurono going away, Lily watched it with her eyes opened wide while shivering her body little by little.

Still, Lily couldn't speak the words to stop him from going away.

「Lily-san, let's go back」

While seeing the wings of Lily which have lost their light, Fiona asked her with worry mixed in her voice.

But as though she didn't hear her voice, Lily just stood there staring at the alley Kurono disappeared into.

「Lily-sa——!？」

She moved to the front of Lily, the moment she saw Lily's face, Fiona sucked in cold breath on the unexpected scene.

「Hi.....Gusu.....」

From the beautiful emerald eyes, transparent shining jewel-like large drops of tears were falling.

「Uu, Gusu.....K, Kurono.....」

She shook her slender shoulders, and while covering her face with white slim hands,

「Kurono got angry at me.....U, Uwaaaaaaaaa!」

Lily cried for the first time in life.

Having refused by her favorite person, being afraid of getting hated, she cried

while raising voice.

As though the sorrow of her heart is seeping out, the tears continue falling without any end.

「Lily-san, even if you cry, I don't know what to do」

The most-unsociable person like Fiona, wouldn't even know the right way to console a crying person.

But, she did feel it won't be good if this crying-young girl fairy is seen by people.

「For the time being, cover the face with this」

And then Fiona, removed the trademark of witches, three-cornered hat from her head and put it on Lily's head.

The witch with pale light blue hair exposed, stood besides the fairy till she stopped crying.

Chapter 157 – Rejection (3)

Without any aim, I kept on wandering around.

I kept on walking through this dark, narrow alley. It was if this was a maze.

I think I said something like 'I'll be back by dinner' but I don't know whether I'll be able to go back from her, no, in the first place, do I even feel like going back?

By the time the sun sets, will I be able to shake of these feelings inside me and tell Lily and Fiona that I'm fine with a smile?

Impossible. I don't have the will power to put up a false bravado or a bluff at all.

"My fault, is it?"

No, that wasn't my fault.

If we hadn't run towards Spada, everyone really would have died.

I, we fought desperately, to let everyone run away.

We didn't know how many of them were there, but those damned Crusaders just kept on coming no matter how many we killed. Against them, our power was limited.

We did buy time, it was barely but we did buy just enough time to run away.

But, in the end, it was all too late, it was useless. While we were fighting, everyone had already died by the hands of the Apostle called Misa.

That's right, the one who should be hated is that Apostle playing around that ruined everything. It isn't my responsibility.

After all I fought so hard.

"As if I could say that....."

Annihilated, that's the result. That's all that matters, that's the reality.

Responsibility, excuses, they don't matter anymore.

It's all my fault, that's right, I couldn't protect any of them.

In front of the graves of my friends in Irz village, I swore, I swore that I won't let anyone else die any more. But even then, haha, how ridiculous, look at the number of casualties I have created.

"I couldn't.....protect anybody."

My heart sank, deeper and deeper, in regret, guilt and helplessness.

I guess, someone like me, a mere high schooler like me, was stupid to think that I could save so many people.

Due to the body modifications and experiments, just because I was given a slightly more power than humans, I ended up deluding myself that I could protect people.

I couldn't save Irz village. Even though I had failed once, I still didn't learn. I really am an idiot.

I should have known my own place better.

Yes, from the time I met Sariel on the castle walls of Daedalus, I had made the wrong choices.

Thinking that I could save everyone if I put my life on the line, I chose to stupidly fight.

I really am an incurable idiot. Was I trying to become a hero? I'm not someone great enough who could save people.

I'm just one single human who can't even protect himself properly.

That time, I should have simply agreed to Sariel's words when she said that she wouldn't chase me even if I run away, and should have simply taken Lily away with me.

That was the correct answer. That would have been the best answer. Everyone else can very well be damned!

That's right, just as Cyprus had said, I will remain as No.49 forever. I should know my own limits of what I can actually protect.

I should stop thinking of protecting everyone.

I should stop thinking that I can save people.

“I don’t have what it takes to save someone…….”

Yes, just think only of yourself and those extremely precious to you.

Don’t take too many responsibilities. Don’t uselessly butt your head into things.

Because, no matter what I want, what I do, this will be the result.

There’s only pain, suffering, and sadness in that.

These feelings, such feelings are too heavy for me. I’m not someone who can carry them. I shouldn’t be the one to be burdened by them.

The only people I’m responsible for are me and the few of my precious comrades, that’s all.

I don’t care anymore. No matter how much the Crusaders conquer over the Pandora continent, it doesn’t concern me anymore.

It’s fine as long as only we run away. If it’s just running away without fighting, I can manage, I can keep on living.

“That’s why, I’m not going to try and save anyone anymore.”

Give up, give up on everyone else. Ignore them. They don’t concern me. Leave them be.

I am me, they are they. Everyone’s responsible for their own lives.

I’ll remember this. So that I don’t fail again, so that I don’t suffer again. I’m not a person who can save people, I’m not a hero. I have my hands full simply taking care of myself. I’m just one small person.

Yes, this is my resolve. I’ll abandon others and I’ll act according to it.

“Kyaa! Help!——”

At that moment, a shrill scream entered my ears.

My body that had been moving as if it didn’t even recognise my surroundings; finally my consciousness faced the outside.

The place I’m standing now is the same as the one I was standing before. A part of the dirty slums.

I couldn't hear the screams anymore but, in the alley just in front of me, some voices that seemed to be quarrelling came out showing that the scream I heard before wasn't an illusion.

My heartbeat became faster.

Is someone getting attacked there?

Then, quickly I need to—

“Ha,hahaha, Am I an idiot!?”

To have forgotten my resolve in just 3 steps, I'm really an incurable idiot.

I will not try to save anybody else, I can't do it properly anyway.

“Avoid troublesome things. Adventurers are such people right?”

I began to walk.

When I passed through the alley from which many voices were coming out, I unintentionally shifted my gaze towards it.

“auu, st, stop, please.....”

“Shut up! If you give it to us obediently you won't have to feel any pain, you know?”

“Hurry up and pay fucking brat!”

A girl had been cornered to a wall and three large men were closing in on her.

It's a clichéd extortion scene, no, the girl is good looking with her black long hair and ruby red eyes. If even a single one of those men liked younger ones, it won't end with them simply taking her valuables.

Thinking what else could be stolen, I felt disgusted and sick.

“Stop thinking foolish things.”(kuro no)

At such a place, such things should be normal.

What would happen if I try to act smart and get involved in some big mess?

Those 3 men look like typical thugs but if they have the backing of some gang that rules the underground of this town? Even if it wasn't something so grandiose, there's a high chance that they could have a lot of comrades.

If I made someone like them into enemies, it simply won't end as something 'troublesome'. There's a chance that we'll be in danger 24/7.

Also, there's a chance that even with those looks, they might be strong level 5 adventurers and stronger than me.

Impossible, that word doesn't exist. I had thought that it would be impossible for an Apostle to appear and in the end, everyone was killed by that Apostle.

An Apostle eh? Haha, maybe one of those men is also an Apostle like the 8th Apostle Ai, no, maybe all three of them are Apostles.

When I was thinking that only Sariel was on Pandora, 2 of them appeared and at the same time in front of me. Considering how they appear out of nowhere, it's not impossible.

"C'mon! I'm saying to hurry up, aren't I?!!"

"Ah, noo——"

The man in the centre violently grabbed the girl who looked younger than Lily's true form.

Due to the momentum, her grey simple clothes tore and bared her white shoulders and body.

Seeing till that, I passed by the alley.

From behind me, the voices of those thugs and the screaming of that girl could be heard.

"This is fine."

I've decided, to not try to save anyone else.

Chapter 158 – The Power of Protection (1)

Robbery, theft, extortion, pickpocketing, almost every kind of crime related to money was something very normal in slums and areas where poor people lived.

Of course, Spada was no exception.

Even now, in an unpopulated alleyway, a pitiful victim was currently present.

“Kyaa! Help!— —-“

Young, probably around the age of 10, the girl raised a scream asking for help but her scream was soon stopped.

Before she realized, in front of him 3 men were standing. All of them were humans including the girl herself. It wasn't really rare in Spada where the population was vast and high.

Each of those men had large bodies and their arms seemed to have strong muscles. Also, the numerous scars made them look even more villainous.

“auu, st, stop, please.....”

As the men approached with dreadful expressions, she felt that the men looked even bigger.

The words spoken by the girl were truly weak but the fact that she was even able to say that was praise worthy.

“Shut up! It'll be fine as long as you give it to us?”

“Hurry up and pay, little brat!”

Of course, the men wouldn't stop just because she said so. The men had no guilt even when committing such crimes.

“C'mon! Hurry it up I said!!”

“Ah, noo— —“

As the man in the middle got impatient, he violently grabbed the collar of the girl.

She was also wearing the same simple and shabby clothes that the children in this area wore.

Let alone magical effects, one could tell that it was an inferior product just by looking at its material quality.

Due to the force of the man, the cloth tore open with a ripping sound.

The girls bare skin was exposed.

Even if one didn't have a young girl fetish, a man would get captivated on seeing that fresh white skin from the neck to the shoulders.

And, though she had a boyish, short hairstyle, her silky black hair, her red shining eyes and her cute face would definitely qualify as a beauty.

And if such a girl would be in a condition when her clothes were in disorder; it was obvious what those violent, beast-like men who lived by their greed and lust would think.

“Kyaaaaa!”

As the girl screamed once again, the men, driven by a greed other than that of money, rudely stretched their arms.

“Oi, stop there.”

A single man appeared.

Just like the girl, he had black hair but his right eye that didn't have an eyepatch was of a colour of deep black darkness.

He had an uncommon combination of black hair and black eyes, but what was more unusual was the sharp glint in his eye that the man was releasing.

Due to the voice that suddenly appeared, the men stopped their arms that were moving towards the girl.

But, obviously they wouldn't reform themselves now.

Becoming vigilant of the sudden intruder, two of them entered into battle stances. The remaining one was grasping the girl tightly so that she doesn't run away.

“aa, who the fuck are you?”

The question was very normal but it possessed an immense amount of threat and intimidation in it.

As he threatened, he observed the man who had appeared.

His body was as big as theirs. A white shirt and a pretty damaged black leather pants. His look was shabby, similar to those living here.

But, his toned muscular body even better than theirs, and his posture that left no openings, showed that he was not a civilian who didn't know how to fight.

The plate hanging around his neck was the proof of that.

A true guild card, there's no way they'd mistake it.

"Haven't seen your face here. If you're a newbie then we'll let you live. This happens here 'all the time'. Even an adventurer would be sorry if he cockily tried to butt his head in our matters."

The man who restrained the girl, even after knowing that the man in front was an adventurer, said that with a composed smile. His tone expressed that he knew that they still were superior here.

That's because, the man's steel plate showed that he was the lowest, rank 1 adventurer.

A mere beginner. No, considering his look, he might be a bit more experienced but not really much.

Also, they had not heard any rumours about some black haired black eye adventurer with an eyepatch that had done some great deed either.

That means, he was a normal rank 1 adventurer, at max he might be strong enough as a new rank 2 adventurer.

On top of that, he was unarmed no matter how you look at it. He didn't seem to have hidden even a single knife on his body.

The 3 men, after evaluating the intruder, came to the conclusion that he wasn't much a threat.

"C'mon, hurry up and get out of here sonny."(T/N: he says an-chan, and I couldn't think of a better TL than sonny for it.) "nn, or could it be, that you've

got something to do with this brat? Hehehe, you've got a pretty good hobby. Alright, I'll give this as present to you sonny. No need to hold back though she'll be second hand goods by the time you get her back hiyahahaha!"

The three men laughed in a loud vulgar voice.

And the rank 1 adventurer, with no change in expression, took one step forward.

"I said stop, didn't I? Obediently let that girl go."

The men who heard that calm voice quickly changed their atmosphere to a violent one.

"Are you going to fight us? Not a really good decision."

The man tightened his fist and released a distinct killing intent.

"You should keep your adventures to those quests of yours."

The other man also released killing intent.

A normal person would have been affected by that overwhelming presence and would have been overcome by fear.

"I'm telling you to let her go. Please, can't you listen to what I say?"

As if ignoring those two men who were releasing killing intent, he spoke that towards the third one who was holding the girl.

"Hah, a fool trying to act as a hero eh? Oi, kill that bastard."

With that voice as a signal, the two men began to move together.

"I see—[Magic Bullet Arts]"

The adventurer who muttered that, that sound didn't reach the ears of the three men.

That's because those men were too far away to hear the adventurer's mutterings.

And, the 2 men who had been rushing towards him were,

"Gahh!"

"Guhaa!!"

Fainted after getting hit by a black lump that was fired from the adventurer's hand.

They didn't understand what had hit them, no, even if they had seen it, they simply wouldn't have realized what that black object was.

In any case, the 2 men had already been blown in the air due to the impact.

And soon their bodies struck the stone walls on the side of the alley with a dull sound and fell limply like corpses.

"Tch, this bastard! What the fuck did he do!?"

Due to the fact that the 2 men had suddenly fallen, the third man didn't have the composure to focus on the girl and let go of her hand.

At that moment, the adventurer crossed over the two fallen men who were either dead or had simply fainted and had started running towards the third man.

But, maybe because he was used to such situations, the man didn't panic and drew the dagger from his back.

"Dieee!!!"

Although he said that, the man's aim was not really one that could kill in a single strike.

Although the man was in an advantage with a knife, the situation would reverse if it was taken away from him. So there was no need to uselessly go close to the adventurer and enter his range. He could simply slowly cut him little by little and take away his stamina.

Not to mention that killing someone inside the city would bring more trouble. If possible, the man wanted to leave that man in a half-killed state.

Thus, his aim wasn't the heart or neck but the adventurer's limbs.

The man decided to first aim for his arms.

"riyah--"

The man's knife shot out towards his opponents arm.

The adventurer's fist would be cut by his knife, no, he was sure of it.

pakiiin!

But, it was blocked by a black shield that appeared suddenly.

It was completely black plate, a 20cm small square.

But still, the man soon understood that it had been created by magic.

“Defensive magic!?!”

As words of surprise left his mouth, the other arm of the adventurer punched into his face.

“higiyaa——”

Letting out a pathetic sound, the man blew away to the other side of the alley.

His body finally fell and rolled and crashed spectacularly into something but the adventurer had already lost interest in him and didn’t even look towards him.

Those sharp eyes that had been glaring at the man were now filled with gentleness and looked towards the girl.

“Are you injured?”

“No, I’m fine.”

The girl, unhesitatingly gave an answer towards the man who had saved her.

And spoke, as she looked into his dark abyss like eyes while gazing at him with her deep crimson burning eyes.

“Thank you very much, for saving me.”

Honest words of gratitude.

The adventurer also, answered with a wide smile.

“You’re welcome.”

Chapter 159 – The Power of Protection (2)

Think about only yourself, abandon everyone else, avoid troublesome things, don't butt your head in problems, that's the right way, the clever way to live.

I know, I agree to it from the bottom of my heart. But,

“Kyaaa!!”

If I hear someone scream like that, I have no choice but to help them!!

Before I knew it, I had beaten the shit out of those three men.

The last man had said to me – ‘a fool trying to act as a hero eh?’. That's right, it's exactly as he had said.

I truly am an idiot who would break his resolve in a matter of minutes. And even after the failure I had suffered and victims I had created, I would still ‘try to act’ as a hero and save a person who is in trouble.

But, what's wrong in that? Why is that not allowed?

So many people died? I couldn't protect anyone? That's why, I don't have the right to try and protect anyone anymore?

Nay, that is false.

Next time, next time definitely, I might be able to save someone.

Don't get scared. My body still possesses the immense amount of black magic inside me.

Inside my head, logic tries to deny my actions.

But it's no use. I can't follow that logic. This body, my instincts, my soul, all reject that logic.

In a situation where a young girl was getting attacked in front of me, I really couldn't do something like abandon her and ignore her.

And there is no way I would regret my actions.

After all, this time definitely, I was able to save a person.

“Are you injured?”

“No, I’m fine.”

The girl smiled happily. Her deep crimson eyes looked directly into my eye.

“Thank you very much, for saving me.”

Honest words of gratitude came to my ears.

No, I should be the one to thank you.

Because I was able to save you, because you thanked me, I was able to break free of these dark feelings that were dragging me to hell.

But, the girl doesn’t know anything about me, there’s no way she could.

That’s why, without saying anything useless, I answered simply.

“You’re welcome.”

Was I able to smile properly right now?

No, maybe right now, I’m showing the best smile I have shown in my whole life.

My heart has cleared up, there’s no need to hesitate any longer.

With this, I can take action as I want, I can walk while looking forward.

What I need right now is more power, a power to destroy even Apostles.

I’ll become stronger, stronger than anything else, and next time definitely, I’ll protect everyone—

“fufu, I really thank you. You really came to save me, I believed you definitely would do so, Kurono Mao.” (T/N: she uses ‘boku’ for ‘I’) Those words, attacked me with a clear feeling of unpleasantness.

Reflexively, I jumped away from the girl and took some distance and put myself on guard.

“Why, do you know my name?”

And with the perfect pronunciation.

Both Sariel and Lily know my full name but they cannot say it with the perfect

Japanese pronunciation.

My intuition told me, the girl I saved wasn't 'normal'.

"No need to be so cautious really, I am not your enemy."

The girl's smile back then cute, but now it feels strangely terrifying.

Just what the hell is up with this chain of events? Was this some kind of trap to set me up?

If that's the case, then I have no reason to go along with it. It's too dangerous to go against an unknown enemy, The best choice right now is to quickly run away.

"Ah, wait, it's fine even if only for a while, just listen to what I have to say, can you?"

Before I could take my first step to run out of the alley, the girl stopped me as if she had somehow realized what I was going to do.

But, without really heeding to those words, I decided that I really needed to get away from here as fast as possible but, "What, the walls are!?!"

Before I realized, the stone walls on the side began to move after turning into a jet black swampy thing.

I realized the genuine crisis I was in but, the walls, no, the whole alley began to change faster than that.

Numerous tentacles flew out of the ominous wall and entwined with each other to seal the passage completely.

It's as if a wall of black thorns had appeared. I doubt I could even destroy it and break through that.

This is the first time I'm seeing a magic like this. To have changed the space in the alley completely is not something normal. It must be a very high level of barrier.

Looking closely, the bodies of the three men I had defeated had also disappeared completely. Were they also a part of this magic?

In any case, it's clear that this girl possess a incredible level of magical ability.

Wait, she really isn't going to turn out to be an Apostle right?

"Who the hell are you? Why are you after me?"

Considering her words, it seems she doesn't want to kill me instantly.

For the time being, it won't be too late to fight after hearing what she has to say. Maybe I might be able to get out of here with just talking as well.

That's why to not show my will to fight, I didn't bring out my [Grudge Hatchet [Hararetsu]].

'Sorry, I know about you but you don't know anything about me, so first let me introduce myself.' (girl) As if trying to make friends with someone after meeting them for the first time, with an amiable smile, the girl's body began to be wrapped inside the tentacles growing out of the black surface.

Those tentacles that had the same feeling as my [Anchor hand] completely covered her, at that moment a change happened.

The girl's ripped grey tunic and her long skirt disappeared and was replaced by those tentacles in the form of a dark black clothing.

If I were to describe the clothes in one word, it would be a mantle on a gakuran. (T/N: google gakuran to see what it looks like.) Rather than a gakuran, it looked more like the military uniform worn by commissioned officers back in old Japan. The black clothes were decorated with gold and silver ornaments as well.

The black mantle with the tall collar looked like those used by vampires in literature works and was so big that it seemed to ignore practicality.

Looking closely, the end of the mantle wasn't hanging on the floor but was integrated with the dark floor itself.

Maybe, this whole black space had been made by her black mantle.

Due to the enormous mantle, it wasn't clear but she seemed to have a sword, no a black wand-like weapon on her waist.

The girl who was dressed like something between a noble and a magician hadn't changed from her young look but rather than a girl, the impression was more like a boy now.

The fact that I was unable to distinguish whether it was a boy or a girl in front of me, only added to ominous feeling I was getting.

But, as if ignoring that sense of anxiety inside me, and now that she/he had prepared for the introduction with the change into black clothing, she gave a satisfied smile.

And, that name was finally spoken from those small lips.

“My name is Mia Elrod, the one who gave you your divine protection. I’ve come to meet you.”

I have no memory of knowing either the name Mia or the surname Elrod. I heard that name for the first time.

But I know what ‘DP’ means.

“Could it be, that you’re a God?”

A God, a truly unrealistic existence was, now that I said it out loud, it felt a bit disconnected from reality.

But, Mia, as if it was obvious, nodded and answered.

“Yes, I am one of the pillars of the [Black Gods] of Pandora.”

This person who named herself as a God; though I know that such magical existences truly existed, I still couldn’t seem to accept that fact.

No, it is a fact there are existences in this world that provide a power known as ‘Divine Protection’ which was neither magic nor martial arts to a person.

But still, when one actually appeared in a no matter how you look at it a human child like form, there’s no way I could accept one as a God.

“Muu, you don’t believe me do you? I really am a God!! You know where you’re pulling your black magical energy from, right?”

As the self-proclaimed God puffed her/his cheeks in anger, looking at that, I slightly became less cautious.

Also, I remembered that Lily had told me that my black magical energy is brought out from the ‘DP of the Black Gods’.

But, it can’t be helped. I really have no feeling of doing so.

“But I guess it can’t be helped since you came from another world I guess? They don’t seem to believe in Gods very much.”

“You know of others that came from another world?”

Since she/he knew my full name, I’ll ignore how she knew that I was from another world but the problem were those words that implied that there have been others like me.(T/N: I’m going to use she for Mia since the name sounds girly.)

“In the era when I lived, there were people like you. In fact there were many more than now.”

“Is that so?.....”

I can understand what she was saying but whether I can actually accept that is a different case.

“I can’t explain in detail though. Even Gods have rules we need to follow after all.”

“Rules among Gods, eh? Then, the fact that you didn’t save us even after what we went through is also because of your rules?”

This is truly unreasonable. Although one can’t depend on others for everything, I still need to hear this if she’s going to call herself a God.

If you’re a God then why did you not save even a single person? Why did you not stop the Crusaders or the Apostles? No, why did you not save me when I was being subjected to those hellish human experiments?

“Gods aren’t omnipotent. It is as you know.”

Mia gazed at me with a serious expression and looked at me directly with those crimson eyes and spoke.

“At least, in this world, Gods aren’t omniscient and omnipotent existences that can do everything. We live in a different dimension than this, in your words we live in the ‘World of Gods’.”

That’s why, even now, Mia in front of me was only a temporary existence.

“We, the ‘Black Gods’, are nothing more than existences that look over this

world from afar. The ways in which a God can interfere with this world are very limited.”

Those ways are, making it rain, giving abundant harvests, and other such natural phenomenon for which humans pray to God.

“So the ‘DP’ you provide to a person is also one of those ways?”

“Exactly. That’s why no matter how much we struggle, we can’t descend directly in this world to save you. In this world, the existence of Gods is nothing more than a ‘system’ to provide power to people. We can simply provide powers that corresponds to the person’s own ability. And the person will have to fight against their ‘enemy’ themselves. Gods save those who save themselves.”

The Gods possess power beyond human knowledge but it can only appear in this world in limited ways possible.

In the end, even after being able to use a part of the power of a God, there’s not much difference from the God on earth. There is no God that can let everyone live happily forever.

Well, I knew that. For a God to save us, it was nothing more than a naïve wish of those who had abandoned the will to work hard in reality.

“So, this is the main issue. I cannot save you directly but I can grant you with strength.”

“Thus you gave me your ‘Divine Protection’, is it?”

Mia gave a nod. It seems she was serious from the start.

“I can’t really believe that so readily. Leaving the fact whether I believe in God or not aside, I haven’t even prayed to you even once. To have granted me DP sounds too convenient, you know?”

I certainly did wish for power, but, God couldn’t have simply said ‘Alright’ and given it to me. That’s just too ridiculous.

Power isn’t something you get just because you wish for it.

I did receive power above humans but that was also a result of me having gone through that hell known as human experimentation.

To attain even more power, I won't get it just like that simply because God allowed it to me.

"No need to worry so much. I'll have you 'act in the name of your faith' from here onwards. A trial, seems to be a better word, I guess."

"A trial eh? I see, that makes sense. You won't give me power that easily."

But, that makes it more believable.

To acquire a DP, to practice while swinging a sword, both are similar ways of attaining power.

In this world, the power of DP is the real deal. Acting in the name of your faith will attain you more than just mental satisfaction.

"Just as you know, to receive a DP, one needs to offer upon their faith, but even though I say that, it's nothing more than trying to flatter and buttering up to a God. In simple words, it's more of a condition that allows God to interfere with this world. No matter how much a God cares for a person, if that God doesn't have the margin to intervene, he can't grant power to that person. And conversely speaking, as long as the conditions are cleared, the Gods have no choice but to provide their DP to that person. They cannot take it back just because they don't like that person."

If those words are true then it's a pretty fair system. The Gods are really meant to be impartial to all.

"You're the first person who has cleared the condition to receive my power, that's why I really want you to work even harder."

"I see, that's also understandable."

But, he wouldn't prostrate right now and say 'Thank you very much God!' either.

Basically, this Mia is still a self-proclaimed God.

Their talks till now, could have been total bull for all he knew. Mia still hadn't given a proper proof that she was a God.

Although, the fact that she could such level of magic showed that she was at least not a normal girl like he had originally thought.

“fufufu, that’s fine, even if you don’t believe in me now. To ask one to believe in them from the very start is simply the arrogance and selfish pride of a God. To earn one’s faith, the God should be the first to give some benefit, right?”

What she says is reasonable.

Even in Earth’s legends and folklore, there was a pattern where one would be worshipped only after he saved someone with the help of supernatural powers.

“That’s why I’ll provide you with the DP within the given margin of what I’m allowed.”

“Weren’t you going to give me a Trial?”

“Since you have the power to face off against those Apostles of the White God, I’ll treat that as a trial which is why I’m giving you this power.”

The White God and its Apostles. If she knows even that, does that mean she really is a real God?

“In terms of you adventurers, this is something of an advance to earn your trust in me. That’s why I want you to accept it now.”

Saying that she gave a smile and Mia came closer towards me.

Although I felt an unspeakable presence on my skin, it didn’t have either animosity or killing intent.

Even if she wasn’t a God, it doesn’t change the fact that Mia has abilities far above my own.

Although, receiving DP sounds a bit suspicious but I should obediently listen here.

“Well if you’re going to give it to me, then why not?”

I still don’t know what DP is actually like.

But, if I can actually receive a power, or should I call it change, worthy of being called a Dp, then I wouldn’t really mind to treat this cute girl Mia as a God.

“nee Kurono Mao, I’ll tell you one of the conditions you cleared to receive my protection.”

Mia who had walked till right in front of me looked towards the tall me with

upturned eyes.

Being looked at like that, is a bit embarrassing. Even though Mia might be a guy.

“What is it?”

I tried to answer as calmly as possible.

“It was that you didn’t wish for power to kill your hated enemies but you wished for power to protect others.”

“Power for protecting, is it?”

That might be true, now that she said so.

But, it doesn’t change anything I have to do. If the enemy is in front of me, I will kill him.

I’m still a murderer. Just because it was to protect someone, killing someone doesn’t become absolute justice.

I’m aware that I am burdening myself with a great karma.

Though, that doesn’t mean that I will go even a single bit easy on those damned Crusaders.

“That’s why, no matter how much you have to face painful things, do not lose that gentleness of your heart.”

Stop looking at me with those sincere eyes.

I haven’t done anything worth getting such a compliment.

I want to protect everyone. That will of mine is definitely real, but, that’s simply what I want to do.

I haven’t been able to protect anyone till now.

“That’s wrong. Didn’t you just protect me?”

“That was——”

Simply an act. I had simply fallen for her trick.

Without even saying that, Mia spoke with an understanding expression.

“I apologise to have tested you like that. But, I know what you had been thinking till now. Rejected by those who you wanted to help, tormented by your own weakness, giving up on everything, you had resolved to live selfishly for your own sake. I know those feelings of yours.”

It was true. I ended up averting my gaze.

“But still you came to save me. You came to save me, an unknown person, you didn’t abandon me. You did what was right. No one can deny that fact. That’s why, don’t hesitate, next time, you’ll definitely be able to save everyone.”

In reply to those straight forward words I,

“Thanks.”

Could only say that.

I don’t know whether Mia is really a God or not but this child did cheer me up. I need to know only that.

“fufu, even though I’m supposed to be the one to thank you.”

With a gentle smile, Mia really looked like a cute girl to me.

“Then let me grant you with my Divine Protection.”

I can’t power you up yet, she continued.

“Exactly, what will happen?”

“Let’s see, just like a miracle of God, I’ll—”

Mia touched my eyepatch with her fingers.

“—restore that eye of yours.”

“You can do that!?”

Of course, Gods are great! She said that proudly as she puffed out her chest.

“Then, can you bend properly?”

“A, yeah.”

My eye really will heal. Well I’m still in doubt how it’ll regenerate but I bent my knee as Mia wanted.

After kneeling down, I was at the same line of sight at Mia.

She really is as small as a child. Or rather, did I grow even more than 183cm?

While I was thinking of such random things, Mia raised her hand and removed my eye patch.

“Don’t move alright?”

“Aa—wait, wait, what the heck is that!?”

Well, it was nothing more than a tentacle that was extending from the ground.

Maybe she’d have much problem if I moved, countless tentacles wrapped around me and restrained my body.

There’s no pain but I felt unpleasant being wrapped in tentacles. If I was a woman, it would have become a trauma.

“Don’t worry, it’ll be over quickly.”

Saying that with a smile, Mia reached towards her own left eye and,

gurii—

Instantly pulled out her own eyeball.

In Mia’s hand, a small eyeball that had a pupil in a shining crimson colour like the Queen Beryl rolled over.

“Wha,a…….”

I was speechless due to the sudden act of violence.

Surprisingly, the eyeball wasn’t stained in blood. It really looked like a clear jewel. But that doesn’t mean I’m calm.

And while I was being surprised, Mia, as if nothing had happened, simply closed her left eyelid and held the eyeball with her slender fingers.

“Then here I go. From here on, my eye will tell everything necessary.”

No, wait, wait a damn second, she isn’t going to use that eyeball to—

gurigurii—

Certainly, Mia’s eyeball was pushed inside my empty eye socket.

“Guaah!”

A feeling of oppression and a dull pain, and a feeling of something foreign invading my body ran all over my body. I got goosebumps.

But, that feeling also ended quickly.

As the eyeball completely settled inside my eye socket, my consciousness began to fade and I stopped feeling any pain or discomfort.

“Seek and I shall grant—fufu, overcoming my trial, you wish to receive my divine protection.”

Hearing those words in the end, I let go of my consciousness beyond the endless darkness.

Chapter 160 – Power of Protection (3)

As I recovered my consciousness, the sun had already begun to set.

I looked up at that red sky like a fool, from the dark alley.

“What, the heck was that?.....”

I feel as if I just woke up from a daydream.

Yeah, I had been dreaming till now no doubt.

The sudden scream, the fight with the three men, the child Mia who called herself a God—although they happened just recently and I clearly remember it, but it doesn’t have a sense of reality.

Maybe after 5 mins, I’ll forget what happened just as how one forgets what they were dreaming after waking up.

“Am I too tired?”

If I really had been simply dreaming and had been standing here dazed all this time, my heart and mind might have been broken more than I thought.

Neurosis, was it? I had thought that mental illnesses were something unrelated to me but it seems I possess a much sensitive and delicate heart than I thought.

Shaking off such ridiculous thoughts, I, for the time being, began to walk.

By the way, where am I right now? Due to wandering around here and there while being troubled, I have no idea where did I even come from.

Maybe, that’s when I began to daydream. But, thanks to that, my mind has recovered its calmness.

Since its already evening, I’ll end up breaking my promise of returning by dinner.

First, I need to get out of this narrow alley and should get to a wider road.

Spada is already big, and I have arrived here only a few days back. I am not familiar with the roads and streets here at all. To get back to the address of my

residence, I should first try to get back to my starting point.

Now then, the problem is, how should I get back to the main street from here but let's start moving for the time being.

It was already a dim and gloomy alley, and now that the sun was setting, it became more and more ruled by darkness.

With the help of my eyes that could see in the dark, I kept on walking through the same looking alley— —Wait a second, 'eyes'?

".....I can see."

It was, just so natural, that I had not realized it till now.

I was currently using both of my eyes right now to see.

But that's weird, after all, I had lost my left eye to the 8th Apostle's attack.

But even so, my left eye was working like normal.

Why? How? I questioned but I could only think of one answer.

"Let's see, just like a miracle of God, I'll restore that eye of yours."

I recalled that abnormal act as she had pulled out her own eye and pushed it into me.

But, with just that,

"My eye, really healed?"

I had no reason to doubt. It was a fact that my left eye had healed.

Then all that happened just now was real and not a dream. Then that child Mia is actually a God?

"Are you serious?....."

Just as she had said, she really did perform a god-like miracle.

But unlike Paulo, I don't feel like suddenly worshipping Mia as a God.(T/N: not sure but he referencing Paulo Coelho here I think.) No, if my heart had changed that quickly, it would feel more like disgusting brainwashing rather than reforming.

I don't feel like worshipping her for it but Mia did certainly give a clear proof

that she might actually be a God.

Although, there is also the possibility that she was simply an incredible magician with an ability that allowed her to heal my eye instantly as well.

But still, regardless of what Mia's true identity was, it's a fact that she healed my eye and has the will to provide me with the power called 'Divine protection'.

Then, I don't care whether Mia's simply a magician pretending to be God, an actual God, or even an Evil God. As long as she provides me with power, I'm fine with anything.

"I don't know what trial I am supposed to go through but I accept it."

I don't know whether this counts as having faith in her but I still thank her from the bottom of my heart.

She helped me recover, even though it was through such a farce, when I was feeling down and also gave me the possibility to receive her DP.

But, since I don't know the details needed to clear this trial, it seems I can't along with it for now.

If I were to believe her words, 'her eye' or rather my left will tell me when the time comes. Till then, I can only wait for a response from it.

Now then, right now, rather than the details of the trial, I'll be happy if she could tell me how I can get back to my inn though.

"I guess God won't help me that easily."

There's no change in my left eye, that means, I have no choice but to find my own path.

Oh man, I hope I can at least get out of the slums and reach the main street before the sun completely sets—"Kyaaaaaa!!"

I heard a shrill scream.

"Eh, no, seriously?"

Could it be that I am being played around by the God again?

It's the same situation as before. The only thing different is the condition of my mind and heart.

Well then, it really is an extremely suspicious situation but,

“I can’t just act like I didn’t hear anything either, now can I?”

That’s right, I decided to act as however I wanted no matter what.

Even if this scream is a trap, I don’t have the choice to abandon her.

I pray, that I can really save someone actually this time!

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Further in the alley, in a place with crumbling stone walls, a situation exactly like the charade made by the God was progressing.

“Oraa! Hurry up and pay!!”

“hehe, I know you’ve got quite some gold coins!”

Three thugs had cornered a young girl towards the wall.

There was a one-in-a-million possibility that this was some unavoidable situation in which an outsider couldn’t and shouldn’t interfere but, well, going by their way of speaking, I doubt it’s anything else than normal extortion.

“Oi, what’s going on there?”(kuroko)

I don’t even have to examine the situation, I quickly appeared and called towards the thugs.

At the same time I didn’t forget to glare at them in the form of intimidation either. When I seriously glared, the effect was so strong that let alone my classmates, even my friends were unable to look me in the eye.

“Aah?”

The three men turned towards me with a look of hostility.

Since I had just gone through something like this, I only felt a déjà-vu.

But still, it seems this time it’s actually a real extortion.

The three men look completely different from the men I had blown away and

though the girl's attire is similar, she's not Mia.

"Who the fuck are you?"

A stereotypical question came towards me.

For the time being, I was going to say that I was just an adventurer passing by, at that moment.

"Ah, you bitch!?"

"Uoh! Wait!!"

The girl pushed aside the men, and began running.

Due to the sudden actions, the girl quickly passed through me and disappeared in the black alley.

"Well, what can I say.....sorry for the disturbance."(kurono)

The situation resolved itself even though I didn't do anything.

To have run away in that small opening, the girls of Spada are really bold.

Thinking that, I began to turn around when,

"Oi, wait right there sonny."

I was called back.

"Aa, whacha gonna do about this! You hindered our important job!"

"Don't ya think that a little apology and compensation is required!?"

It seems now that their target ran away, the men have taken offence against me.

"You bastard, you're just a rank 1 adventurer right? Trying to act cool like that! Pay up everything you have or we won't let you get out of here alive!!"

Saying that, the skinheaded man with the biggest body drew his sword from his waist and closed in towards me.

The man might be trying to show incredible killing intent but since it had really no effect on me, I was thinking of something completely different like how the guild card on my neck quickly gave away my adventurer rank.

“Ou, what happened, how about apologising to us already!?”

Before I realized, that man was already standing in front of me without even taking a stance with his sword.

“You should hurry up and apologise. Our bro is an amazing warrior that can even uses Boost, a rank 1 adventurer won’t be an opponent for him!”

“Bro cut away his arm with you martial art!!”

The two men behind him were calling this baldy Bro or whatever.

I see, so this guy is a warrior class who can use both Boost and martial art, eh? That really is amazing. I wonder if he was comparable to a rank 3 adventurer.

“Say, you don’t want trouble either right? How about you obediently let me go back?”(kuro) They seem to be all fired up but I try to end this with talking till the very end.

But,

“Are you a fuckin idiot?”

It seems negotiating is impossible.

As that baldy raised that sword overhead with a single hand, he suddenly shouted.

“[Force Boost]!!”

Large biceps could be seen on the right hand that was holding the sword.

“It’s here!! Bro’s [Force Boost]!!”

The underling behind him gave a kind explanation as well.

But, I couldn’t sense any magic from that baldy bro. In the first place, he didn’t even chant. Could it be that he is simply putting all his strength I his hand normally?

“This is the punishment to have underestimated me. Be ready to forfeit one of your hands—-[Slash]!”(bro) Shouting that, he brought down the blade.

“It’s here! Bro’s sure-kill technique [Slash]!!”

Once again a kind explanation was given. By the way, this time it was the

second underling that did the explaining.

But, once again I feel sorry but this slash that had been fired towards me didn't give off any intimidation let alone the pressure of a martial art skill. Isn't he simply using all his strength to swing down his sword?

"haah, and to think I actually put up my guard."(kuro no)

I thought that he might be actually a rank 3 level fighter and had prepared to use my Magic Bullet-Full Burst but it was totally useless.

I grabbed the man's right hand with my left and stopped his sword attack.

"Wha!?!"

The baldy's eyes went round with shock.

That pathetic speed and cheap swordsmanship, and that too without any Boost or martial art; I could stop it with purely my physical skills.

Well, it'll be a pain if kept on swinging his sword around like that so,

"Pile Bunker!"

I smashed my my right fist with black magical energy swirling around it like a drill into the sword handle and destroyed it.

"Th, the sword....."

As I let go of his hand, he stumbled as he took a few steps back and looked at the destroyed sword in his hand dumbfounded.

"Hii!?!"

As he let out a pathetic scream, his underlings behind him ran away just like the girl.

Since I was blocking the only passage, the splendidly did a wall climb and jumped to the other side of the wall.

It seems, not just women but even men of Spada are quick with their feet.

"Ah, Oi, you guys....."

And the baldy could only look at those two running away like a child who had separated from his parents.

Though with the amount of muscles he has along with his shaved head, he only looked disgusting with that expression.

“Oi.”

As I spoke to him,

“Wh, wh, what, what is it, do you still want to fight! Huh!!?”

Even while stuttering and shaking, he took a fighting pose with his two fists. It seems he still has enough energy to try and bluff.

But, I have no reason to go along with it.

“I’m going back now. Don’t chase after me, ‘kay?”(kuroono)

The girl in danger has run away and neither had they taken money from her nor had she been hurt.

I don’t really feel like personally punishing this guy either, After all, I’m just an adventurer passing through. I have no reason to act any more than saving the girl.

“O, okay.....”(baldy)

The man had a clearly relieved expression, and lost the strength in his legs as he fell down right there.

“if possible, try not to do such things anymore. If you work as a proper adventurer, you’ll still be able to earn money.”

Though well aware that they wouldn’t reform themselves with just those words, I still had to say that.

And, though I did nothing, feeling satisfied by saving her, I left the place.

Now then, where is the way back, it’s already dark now.....

Chapter 161 – The Witch’s Lonesome Drinking

(Fiona pov)

I drank a fruit wine which didn’t really taste that good.

This alcohol with slight sweetness and quite bitterness was one of the cheaper drinks in Spada and was thus, also the favourite of the common people, or so a talkative cat beastwoman employee had told me.

The cat-girl was currently running around, setting up the various tables in the diner of the of [Cat’s Tail]. I will also need to order again in some time as well.

Appeasing my thirst with the drink with quality proportionate to its price, the alcohol made my body a bit hotter.

“.....I, shouldn’t get drunk too much.”

Currently I’m stuck in what you could call a dilemma.

Kurono-san who had sunk in disappointment and Lily-san who was sobbing in despair; the reason and cause behind their sadness was completely different to each other but it doesn’t change the fact that both are currently mentally unstable.

Even I felt sad for what happened at Alsace, and was also worried for Kurono-san. Lily-san was, well, paying for her own mistakes, no, I’m worried for her as well.

But, that doesn’t change the fact that as a result, I’m the only one who is still in a completely flat state and that everytime I look at those two, my heart aches badly.

I have very less experience in staying in contact with people so I don’t know how should I talk to them at such a time.

I’m not stressed that I’m unable to talk to them, I’m more stressed by the fact that I don’t even know how to call out and talk to them.

At times when you start loathing yourself, it's better to start drinking, or so my sensei had said I think but, yeah, I can't really accept this.

Thinking back, I could only remember times when sensei had become completely drunk and I had to look after her and not to mention, she didn't even fix her problem either.

I thought this now after emptying 2 bottles of the fruit wine.

"haa, what should I do, Kurono-san?"

Currently, the biggest problem is Kurono-san.

During the incident at Alsace, we really did get the worst tragic conclusion but now we can't do anything to change it.

In the first place, we tried to take on the Crusaders with such few numbers and it wouldn't have been weird if we had been completely annihilated either.

The appearance of an Apostle was completely out of our estimations but it's not like we hadn't thought that we could be annihilated, at least, I and Lily-san did expect that.

I truly feel sad that every adventurer was killed in action but, at least I, have already accepted it as the worst conclusion and at the same time, I feel slightly disgusted of myself for the fact that I wasn't as worried as Kurono-san.

But still, as for the refugees that are alive, because of the actions they took, I only felt anger and didn't feel anything anymore for the victims on their side.

Those people didn't even try to know how much Kurono-san thought of them and worked hard for them.

If Lily-san hadn't jumped out, I might have burned that whole place to the ground. I was irritated enough that I really would not have thought that as a joke.

Thinking that way, Lily-san really took actions coolly and calmly.

Without creating any uproar, she quickly created distance between them, it was a perfect move, it's not something I could have done—but, to think that even that dependable Lily-san would fall so much into depression just from a few words from Kurono-san.....

The current situation would be completely resolved if Kurono-san can recover again.

And, not just in the calculating sense, even I personally find it painful to see Kurono-san in such a state.

Kurono-san, a foreigner who came from another world, the leader of [Element Master], led the adventurer alliance against the Crusaders, strong, and a gentle person.

He accepted me, relied on me, expected of me, and called me a member of his party, his comrade.

On the other hand, Lily-san is completely cool-headed and clever. She possesses cruelty to make anything work towards her own benefits. The only reason why she took me in her party was because she saw some merits in it.

But even then, Lily-san who looked at people with absolute advantage or disadvantage, was much more impartial and fair than the God of the cross religion. Only someone like her could accept a reckless rampaging witch like me.

In that sense, I am thankful towards Lily-san as well as respect her. I haven't known her for very long but I do feel a sense of camaraderie with her.

But as expected, having faced with absolute trust and affection from Kurono-san makes me happy without any need for logic and makes me feel comfortable. Enough that I feel that I will never be alone again.

That's why—yes, that's why, I'm the most scared right now.

What if, Kurono-san stopped being an adventurer? What if he dissolved the party?

"Something like that.....I really don't want to happen."

Every possibility of being separated from him makes me scared.

That's the worst conclusion for me.

Even though I finally met them, people who would accept me, precious people I want to protect.

"But, I....."

Couldn't find any words to say to him.

Pathetic, extremely pathetic. I feel regretful that I had actually been living alone without communicating much with people.

If I am his comrade then aren't I supposed to become his strength especially at such a time? But I don't know what should I do right now.

I need to do something, but what, I do not know—I am facing such an unsightly and foolish trouble really.

And, just when I was caught up in all such negative thoughts,

“Fiona.”

I heard a voice.

There's no way I would mistake it. That was Kurono-san no doubt.

“Kurono-san?”

Raising my face, it was really Kurono-san who was standing there.

“It seems I made you worry, sorry.”(kurono)

And Kurono-san spoke the words of apology, but, his face was different from the time we had parted, it felt somehow much clearer.

Aah, I see—this person, before I could do anything, recovered by himself, he was able to recover by himself. I understood that.

“No, it's fine as long as you have returned safely.”(Fiona)

At the end, I could only hate myself who couldn't do anything but, rather than such petty and trivial thoughts, I am feeling simply happier for the fact that he has returned.

“Welcome back, Kurono-san.”

“Yeah, I'm back.”

Really, I'm so glad. It seems I can still stay by his side.

Chapter 162 – Kurono's Left Eye

In one of the rooms of [Cat's tail], on top of a simple bed, Lily was lying flat with vacant eyes.

Her young figure that remained unmoving on the bed brought upon a sense of both concern and abnormality.

"Kurono....."

At times, Lily would speak that name as if remembering again.

Her green eyes that seemed to have lost their shine, crossed the line of sight with Kurono's black eyes.

There was no one else on the bed except Lily.

But Kurono's eye, only Kurono's eye, was there.

In Lily's line of sight was a container that was lying by the pillow.

That container that originally contained a potion for restoring flesh still had that transparent liquid but in it, a single eyeball was also present.

The eyeball with the jet black pupil, it was the left eye that Kurono had lost.

After Lily woke up from the battle with the Apostle, she had found a chance and had secretly collected Kurono's left eye that fallen away.

Thanks to being stored in a regenerative potion, the eyeball that had been pierced by the arrow had recovered.

But to return this back to Kurono's left eye, all the optic nerves will be needed to be connected properly so in any case, it was a level of healing magic not doable for Lily.

Thus, it had conveniently become a part of her collection which she could gaze at silently whenever she wanted to.

"Sorry.....i'm really....sorry....."

They were words of apology which she had spoken countless times but of course they would never reach Kurono who wasn't even here.

But even then, after practicing apologising countless times towards the eyeball and Kurono's smell that lingered on the bed, Lily had finally become slightly calmer.

Or maybe, she had already dried up all her tears.

"Sorry.....Please don't.....hate Lily."

She had let go of her adult consciousness long ago and returned to her child consciousness.

But just as how Kurono had once explained, the child Lily and adult Lily were not different personalities. There was only a change in their mental age.

Just because she had returned to her child consciousness, it's not like she had forgotten having been rejected by Kurono and neither would it have any change to her passionately burning feelings of love.

In fact, it was in her child form that she had fallen in love with Kurono. She hadn't fallen in love with him after calculating and appraising things like his appearance, personality or abilities.

Lily's young heart that was fully devoted towards Kurono was currently swaying with anxiousness that couldn't be borne by a normal child.

No, in fact she might have been lucky if she was actually a normal child. She wouldn't have kept on being worried about it just because her loved one had slightly rejected her.

But, Lily who was definitely not 'normal' was currently being tortured by anxiety and fear that could burst open her heart itself.

And, after some more time of this never ending pain had passed, the sound of the wooden door being knocked came to her ears and Lily slightly brought her consciousness back to reality.

"Lily-san."

It seems the visitor was Fiona, Lily concluded after hearing that voice that she had heard more than enough.

But, right now, Lily did not have the will power to answer back to her nor did she have the will to do so.

“Lily-san, Kurono-san has come back.”

Just when she was about to sink back into her consciousness, hearing those words, Lily stiffened.

“Ku, Kurono.....”

Her thoughts began to revolve rapidly.

I want to meet Kurono. That desire filled her head instantly but, at the same time, it was a fact that she had been rejected. Lily controlled herself from jumping out from the bed.

“Let’s have dinner together.”

Lily was currently conflicted, but since she had not given any sort of reply to Fiona, words of inviting her came from the door again.

“Kurono-san is not angry at Lily-san that’s why you can be relieved and come out.”

Those words inserted a ray of light inside Lily’s heart.

But, all of her imaginations that she had done till now rejected those sweet words. She ended up doubting the truth of those words.

“Lily-san? I’m entering okay?”

Since Lily gave no reaction at all, Fiona became impatient and opened the door.

For Fiona, it was a fortunate thing that Lily did not have the attention to do something like lock her door.

“Are you sleeping?”

Since Fiona suddenly entered into the room, Lily barely had enough time to quickly hide the potion container with Kurono’s eye underneath the bed.

“uu!!”

Lying down face down on the pillow, she raised a voice of protest towards Fiona.

“So you are awake. C’mon, Kurono-san is waiting for you, let’s go.”

“uuyaa!”

Lily resisted by flapping her small wings and limbs.

Even Fiona who had no skill of reading the atmosphere could understand from Lily’s actions that she is still afraid of meeting Kurono.

“Kurono-san is really not angry at you, Lily-san. In fact, he is worried about you. If Lily-san doesn’t show her face, he’ll be sad, you know?”

“uu.....really?”

Raising her face that had been buried in the pillow, she glanced towards Fiona.

Those eyes had become completely red due to crying too much.

“It’s true. That’s why let’s go meet Kurono-san with a smile.”

If she had been able to say that with a smile, Fiona would have gotten 100 points for that smile but as expected she said that with her usual sleepy looking face.

But still, it still had enough effect to move Lily’s heart.

“.....un.”

Lily readied herself and got up.

In her heart, anxiety and expectation intertwined and maybe because she was in tension, her movements were somewhat awkward and clumsy.

“Then, let’s go, ah, you should wash your face first.”

She couldn’t show her reddened face to Kurono, Fiona gave a surprisingly sensible opinion and led Lily while pulling her small hand out of the room.

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(Kurono POV)

I am currently in one corner of the diner of [Cat’s Tail] and was currently heavily reflecting upon things.

“Kurono.....welcome back.”

Lily said that with a completely unenergetic voice and her eyes were slightly red as well.

There’s no doubt, she was crying.

And the reason for that is without a doubt my mental state for the past few days.

Outside, I did say things like ‘Don’t worry about me’ and ‘I’m fine’ and ‘I am sorry’ and was supposed to not make them worry but that was only what it was ‘supposed’ to do and didn’t really get through to Lily.

It’s obvious after all. Lily possesses strong telepathic powers, I couldn’t fool her just with outer words.

And the result of that was this. I made her worry so much that I made her cry.

And though she didn’t cry, I did make Fiona worry as well, no, in fact, she must have been more worried stuck between the depressed me and the crying Lily.

“I made both of you worry, I’m really sorry.”

I could only bow my head right now.

Nevertheless, I could apologise to them like this only because I have finally regained some peace of mind and I’m in a much better condition compared to the me of this morning.

“No, it’s fine as long as Kurono-san is energetic again.”(fiona)

I felt relieved towards Fiona’s expressionless face that seemed to imply that she was not worried at all about us.

“Kuronooo,uuu!”

While caressing Lily’s head who was clinging to my chest,

“I’m really sorry Lily, I’m fine now so there’s no need to worry anymore.”

I thanked this compassionate tender-hearted fairy with words filled with my feelings.

And while we continued with our heart-warming contact, Fiona, who was the

calmest here, cut to the chase and talked towards me.

“So, what exactly happened with Kurono-san? Looking at that left eye, I doubt you only calmed your heart.”(Fiona) My left eye didn’t have an eyepatch anymore, and had an eyeball that had a working vision.

It was obvious for her to think that there was some kind of reason and connection behind the restoration of my mental state and my eyesight.

And, I had no reason to keep my experience of that time a secret towards my party members.

Well, even I don’t know what exactly happened there though.

“— —I see, ‘Divine Protection’, is it?”

After I was done explaining, Fiona gave a reaction as if she could understand that rather than denying it.

“So, what do you think? Is Mia really a God?”(kurono)

I thought of talking about it but, while being depressed, meeting and god and having been awakened and energetic again really sounds something out of a religious text.

Saying this from a Japanese’s feelings, using the weakness of my mind and heart, I was being fooled and tricked.

“Mia Elrod. I have not heard of a God with that name. Well, I’m from the Republic in the first place so I don’t really know much about the [Black Gods] of Pandora in the first place.”

The only ones we know are the names of the Gods that had been named by the members of the adventurer alliance.

“Then, what do you think, Lily?”(kurono)

I asked towards the fairy who was still firmly sitting on my lap.

“Mia? Un, umm, un…….”

Lily muttered while thinking and making such sounds.

But, seriously speaking, Lily is the one here with the most knowledge about the [Black Gods].

After all she is a possessor of the DP of [Fairy Queen Iris]. She should at least know what kind of power is a DP.

“Ah!!”

Lily raised her voice like that, a *ting* sound effect appeared in my mind.

“Did you remember something?”

“Un, Mia Elrod is the name of the ancient Demon King!”

Hearing that answer, I found it even more suspicious but considering it more thoroughly, I could remember only one thing from hearing the word [Demon King].

“Could it be, the one that completely unified Pandora in the ancient times?”(kuroono)

“Un!”

So it really is the legend of the ‘ancient Demon King’. I see, so that Demon King’s name was Mia Elrod.

I had heard that the Dragon King of Daedalus had the ambition to unify whole of Pandora as he admired that Demon King, when I was learning things about this other world at the Irz village at Village head Shione’s house.

The legend of the demon king is famous enough that everyone in Pandora knows about it.

In the first place, the dungeons were classified as [Ancient] as the same time when the Demon King was active and the existence of the dungeons and the demon king always appear as a set together in legends.

“In ancient times, it was said that he who accomplished great deeds in this world would ascend to the throne of gods. If it’s a person from legends, it wouldn’t be weird for them to have actually ascended towards godhood and become able to provide DP to others.”

It was a theory I had heard before.

Vulcan’s DP [Wolfegand] was a giant wolf monster and Su-san’s DP [Hanzoma] was a legendary assassin.

Gods don't give birth to gods. Living people or monsters are sublimated as such existences upon death apparently.

Then, if it was a person that was the only person in the history to have unified Pandora, it would be weird if such a person did not become a God.

"nn, but, there's no one who has received the divine protection of the Demon King, you know?"

As per Lily's explanation, many people in history have tried to receive Demon King Elrod's DP. Even the infamous Dragon King also tried but, each and everyone had failed completely.

Reversely speaking, if there was a person who had received the Demon King's protection, that news would quickly spread all over Pandora, even a small village like Irz would get that news.

By the way, Lily had heard such rumours appearing three times after she was born but apparently all turned out to be fakes.

"Now this really has become even more suspicious."(kurono)

I am not stupid enough to proclaim "Yeah! I'm the first man to have received the Demon King's DP!" here.

A demon King that is extremely famous yet no one has been able to receive his DP. Rather than thinking that I really have received something that amazing, it's more plausible to think that that child simply used that name falsely.

"But, even if she wasn't the actual Demon King, it seems it's true that Kurono-san really has received some sort of DP."(Fiona) "No, though my left eye did heal perfectly but——"

"That red eye isn't Kurono-san's right?"(Fiona)

I felt a slight unease when Fiona pointed that out.

True, this eye isn't mine. It was that child's left eye.

No, that's fine. What's troublesome is the 'red' part.

"Wait, is my left eye red?"

"Yes, that too a completely bright red colour."

Want to confirm? Saying that, Fiona brought out a mirror from her hat.

While awkwardly thanking her, I looked at the mirror.

“Wha, What the hell is this!?!”

There, I could see my own deep crimson eye.

Since it had been comfortable working as my left eye, I thought that it had also become black like my right eye but apparently Mia really did shift her own eye as it is.

“It looks cool Kurono-san.”(Fiona)

“Kurono’s cool!”(lily)

As cold sweat flowed down my brow, I stared at myself who had suddenly become a possessor of heterochromatic eyes.

Is this real? Even those fucked up masked men did nothing to my looks but to think that I’d get an image change at such a time.....

“un, well, as long as I can see properly, I guess it’s fine.”(kurono)

That’s right, what’s important is the end result. If I were to complain for such a thing, I would incur divine punishment even if Mia wasn’t an actual God.

“That’s true, I don’t know whether that child was actually the Demon King but you should still be thankful for that eye. From what I’ve heard, you should also understand the true form of your DP as well.”(Fiona)

Just as Fiona said, I’m not in a situation where I am perfectly aware of the truth.

Afterwards, Lily also told me that by conducting a ritual in a temple where the black gods are enshrined, one could know whether one has really received some kind of DP and what kind of power has been received from that DP as well.

Only, if the DP isn’t strong enough, it’s difficult to distinctively know about it and the ritual will be a failure and a waste of money as well. It’s a bit of a dirty business. I guess all religion related business are like this no matter where you go.

In any case, to know whether I have really gained the DP of the Demon King,

first I'll have acquire a DP strong enough so that the ritual doesn't fail.

And until and unless I know what this 'trial' is that Mia spoke of, nothing will begin.

Let's just be happy that I got my eyesight back and a possibility to attain a DP.

"For the time being, I have no idea what this trial is so let's work normally as adventurers rather than wasting time aimlessly looking for it."(kuroono) Since I had revived(?), we need to seriously discuss how to live in Spada.

"Un, let's go on a quest together!"(lily)

"Oh, this is the first time we three will take a quest together, right?"(Fiona)

Well, things happened after all.

It's not like gotten completely over it, I haven't forgotten it either but, I have recovered my drive to do things, that's it.

From here onwards as well, the days of being haunted by nightmares like today would continue but I won't do something that would make Lily cry.

"I'm also looking forward to working together as [Element Master] as well but — —"(kuroono)

It's fine, I can still move forward.

It's fine, I still have comrades that would walk with me.

"I want to become stronger so let's take on difficult quests that would test our abilities. How about it?"(kuroono) "un, Lily is always together with Kuroono!"(lily)

"Yes, I have no problems with it either."(Fiona)

The two readily consented with me.

"I want to become strong enough to defeat an Apostle."(kuroono)

"Lily's will work hard together with you as well!"

"Yes, this party really might become strong enough to take down an Apostle I think."(Fiona)

Thanks for the reassuring words.

With this I continue with our adventurer lifestyle without any hesitation.

“Alright, let’s work hard to level up together!!”(kuroono)

Next time, next time definitely, along with those thousands of religious fanatics of theirs, I will kill an Apostle with these hands.

Chapter 163 – An Oracle to the Hero

The Holy City Elysion, which was the centre of politics, economy, everything of the Syncrea Republic.

Befitting of the place where the authority of the White God was concentrated, the headquarters of the Cross church [Holy Elysion Cathedral] had a pure white majestic look. In one of the rooms in the depths of the cathedral, 2 of the strongest authority holders of the Cross were currently meeting.

Unlike the outer appearance of the cathedral, this room had no adornments at all and was simply surrounded by pure white walls but with the help of numerous magical and physical methods, this room was created to ensure absolute confidentiality.

It was truly and appropriate place for these two to meet in secret.

“It really has been a long time since we have met, just the two of us, like this, right?”

An old man with a wrinkled face, that was the proof of his age, was smiling and sitting on an armchair that was simple like the room yet complexly created.

He was the one who stood above the millions of followers of the cross [Pope] Alexanderos the 11th.

“Pardon me for the sudden visit, your highness Pope.”

The one who spoke with the hard yet low voice was a man with a height that reached 2m.

His sharp body line with his big frame, his dignified closed lips and tall nose and his chiselled face gave of the feeling of both beauty and boldness of a man, an ideal figure.

Even among that, what really caught attention was his eyes that had different colour.

His transparent-like long silver hair were slightly longer for a man, and though the bangs slightly covered his eyes, his heterochromatic eyes gave off an

overwhelming presence.

His left eye was black like the dark night and his right eye was blue like the clear sky itself.

Though there were many who had heterochromatic eyes, none had a colour combination that varied like day and night like his.

In front of this man with a unique appearance, Pope Alexanderos spoke in a truly weird way.

“There’s nobody here to look at us, stop speaking to me like reserved stranger.”

The man who heard that, as if all the courtesy he was showing to the Pope had blown away, flopped down on the seat opposite to the Pope’s instantly.

“That’s true Alex, I still can’t get used to speaking to you so formally.”

The man who had removed his expressionless face that he had been showing till now was now smiling and speaking in a tone used with a childhood friend.

“Hahaha, it’s been 20 years since I was inaugurated as the Pope, even you should get used to it already.”

The Pope who had been called by his nickname changed his expression from his gentle smiling face shown to believers to a somewhat childish smiling expression.

“Has already so much time passed? When speaking of Pope, I can still only think of that old hag Crossray laughing loudly.”

After hearing the name of the previous Pope after a long time, Alex gave a wry smile and once again realized how fast time passed.

“In that sense, I can also only think of you as the man who proclaimed himself as [The White Hero], Abel.”

“Oh don’t remind me of that. It was a mistake of my youth.....”

The man that gave a bitter regretful expression was truly the 2nd Apostle Abel that acted as the mediator of the 12 Apostles.

Normally he would only show himself in a hood and robe covering his whole

body and would always seem calm and composed but if they were to see his rich face full of expression, more than half of the Apostles would open their mouths in shock.

“The legend of the Hero Abel is famous not just in the republic but even the whole Arc continent. No need to try and hide it now.”

In fact isn't that more embarrassing? Alex asked,

“No, my duty is already finished. I'll leave the rest to the young ones.”

But Abel replied in an old soldier fashion.

But still, Abel continued speaking after returning to his usual cold expression.

“But it seems, I can't simply do that just yet.”

On those words, Alex also turned to a serious expression.

“Hou, so that's the main topic for today?”

He asked what had happened without beating around the bush.

“I received an Oracle, that the Demon King will be born.”

On the words Abel spoke, Alex opened his eyes wide with surprise.

“A Demon King, you say? What's that supposed to mean? I haven't heard of such an ominous oracle ever before.”

The 'haven't heard' part applied to the word 'Demon King' itself as well.

In the first place, the word 'Demon' was used to signify evil that's why all those who lived on Pandora were referred to as 'Demons'.

And to call someone from the scorned demons with the title of 'king' was never possible in the human-ruled Arc continent.

Thus, [Demon King] wasn't referred to as a person who left his name in history but as a general name for the final enemy that needs to be defeated by the Hero chosen by the God.

“Even I'm not aware of the details but considering it properly—-“

'Demons' already exist, the a Demon King would be an existence that would rule over those demons.

“But Pandora is divided among various countries. Is there any power except our own that has the ability to unify and control the whole continent?”

The Pope had obviously never gone to Pandora himself but since God had personally asked them to conquer it, he had been looking over all the information regarding it.

And as far as he had heard, he could only think of the situation there as the situation of countless warring states fighting each other barbarically, which was once also the case in Arc continent a long time ago.

“No, someone who can do that will appear now, that’s why the oracle said ‘A Demon King will be born’ is it?”

Alex had answered his own question to which Abel gave a nod agreeing with him.

“I’m the only one who has received this Oracle.”(abel)

“umu, it was the same during the previous ‘ritual’ as well. Including me, no other priest has received the oracle either.”(pope) Their talks continued as if there was no doubt the Oracle.

Alex had no doubt that Abel might be lying, no, nobody in the whole Republic would doubt him.

After all, he was an Apostle. He would never do something to defile the name of God.

“It seems God has appointed only me for this task. As usual it is a completely unexplained demand but it’s not like I can ignore it either.”

With an expression that seemed to have given up on thinking too much, he gave a short sigh.

To call a holy Oracle as an ‘unexplained demand’ was not something that could be forgiven to a normal believer but because he was an existence that was closest to a God, an Apostle, he was allowed to speak like that.

“Then, you’ll be going to Pandora?”

“I need to go scold those three idiots who went to sightsee in Pandora as well after all.”

The three idiots referred to the three who actually went with the intent to meet Sariel, *i.e.* the 3rd, 11th, and the 12th Apostle.

Obviously, Alex knew that the 3rd Apostle Mikael had already failed as the leader of those Apostles to educate them without even being told by Abel.

And even if they were such troublesome Apostles, they needed to be put on work for the defence of the Holy City Elysion.

If the 2nd Apostle Abel also went away before they came back, the only ones remaining here would be the 5th Apostle Johannes and the 'legendary' 1st Apostle that might not even appear at all.

The 4th Apostle Judah had once again secretly went away on a journey so it was impossible to call him back now.

Thus, Abel could not leave till those three returned and the safety here was guaranteed.

But, at the fact that Abel was about to leave towards Pandora, Alex made an amused face and spoke.

"fumu, I see, so it's the beginning of another legend of the hero Abel, eh?"

The last time the 2nd Apostle left Elysion was 20 years back when a huge invasion by heretics of the east took place in the Republic.

But, for Alex, the [White Hero] Abel was an existence that wouldn't lose no matter where he went or who he faced which is why even when he was going directly into enemy territory, Alex could only think of poking and making fun of him.

"It's not a joke. I'll just roam around randomly and return." (Abel)

"And wouldn't that mean that Demon King really would end up being born?"

Abel gave a nod while smiling wryly.

"Without any leads, in the first place, it is doubtful whether he actually is on Pandora. There's no way I'd find him like this."

Sitting on white throne floating in the darkness, an evil looking man wrapped in jet black clothes and laughing loudly; it's hard to think that such a

stereotypical Demon King that appears only in fairy tales exists even in Pandora.

“Even the oracles aren’t absolute, you should know that better than anyone else.”

Expecting the Demon King to be on Pandora, and just because he went to that direction, fate made them meet and Abel goes ‘So you’re the Demon King!!’; something miraculous like that will not happen, even Alex knows that.

An Oracle is simply a demand from the God, it’s not destined to be successful either.

The believers would work hard to make it a reality but whether they can really do it or not is a different matter altogether. Just as how the conquest of Pandora had been almost abandoned.

“Probably, a Demon King will be born no matter what. After the fall of Daedalus, every country would see the Crusaders as enemies and there’s a chance that every country would unify against the Crusaders.”

There is a high chance that the various countries would become one in such a time, then the birth of a demon king wouldn’t be weird either.

“but, I doubt it’ll go that smoothly. Just how many countries are there in Pandora? How many races are there? If one was to rule over all of them, he’ll need to have absolute strength to do that.”

“Still in any case, if someone like a Demon King will appear, it’s better to take some measures in advance.”

Even then, I’ll have to go to Pandora, Abel said that as if he was troubled by it and found it tiresome.

“Then, should we contact the Crusaders and ask them to look for this Demon King, or anything indicating to it?”

“No, it’ll only create chaos right now. And only reports about rumours would come back. Till the situation becomes a bit more clearer, or at least till another Oracle comes, I’ll move alone.”

Of course, for the 2nd Apostle to take action himself was equal to a thousand man army taking action but Alex decided not to say that.

“Very well, I understand. Then I’ll make preparations for you to cross over to Pandora.”

“Sorry for the trouble as always.”

He had allowed three Apostles to go to Pandora for personal reasons but he didn’t expect that he himself would also have to do the same thing.

“That’s all for today, then, let us both return to our duties, your Highness Pope.”

And thus, after giving some words of formality to the Pope, Abel began to leave.

“umu, I had fun talking to you after all this time. Made me remember the old days. Now then, 2nd Apostle Lord Abel, have a safe journey.”

Saying that, the Pope Alexanderos the 11th put on his pure white robe and left the room with a magnificent walking pace that would make one doubt his age.

After seeing him off, Abel also stood up and

“As expected, the legend of the Hero Abel won’t end till he defeats the Demon King, eh?”

He muttered to himself in a small voice.